

Grade 5-12

# Vocabulary Activities & Templates

TEMPLATES  
KIT

- A range of strategies for building vocabulary
- Flexible templates to support your teaching
- Teaching ideas, games and displays

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# Introduction for Teachers

In recent years, there has been an increased focus on vocabulary development and the word gap in schools. The term “word gap” is used to describe how students with a limited vocabulary are disadvantaged in a range of ways.

Research suggests that students with a limited vocabulary make slower progress than expected and have lower overall attainment. They can struggle to work independently and even find it more difficult to make friends. They are also more likely to leave school early and to be unemployed as adults.

In the wake of COVID-19, schools throughout the country are focusing on explicit vocabulary teaching to reduce learning loss and close the attainment gap.

## What can teachers do to close the word gap?

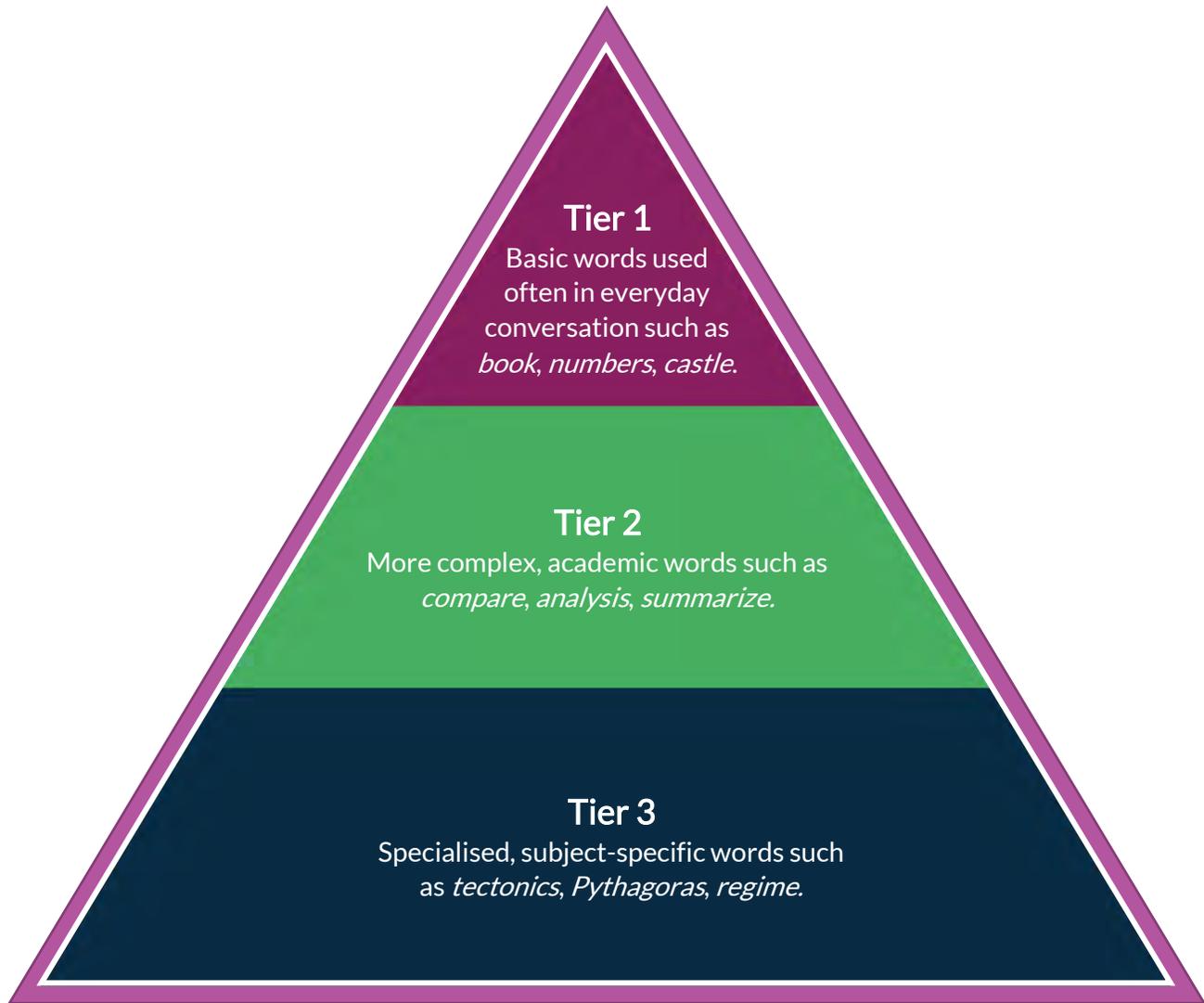
Although most words are learned indirectly through reading and listening, students still need direct, explicit teaching of important or new words.

Literacy experts have identified three vocabulary tiers:

**Tier 1 (basic)** – Words used often in our everyday conversation, e.g., *walk, play, weather*. In grades 3–5, some ELL learners may still need help with acquiring these, but by middle school the majority of students will be well equipped with these words.

**Tier 2 (High frequency/multiple meaning)** – Words that often occur in academic settings or in standardized as instructional words, e.g., *assess, contrast, devise*.

**Tier 3 (Subject-related)** – Specialized or subject-specific-words, e.g., *equation, photosynthesis, soliloquy*.



These word gap templates support the explicit teaching of Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, and offer a variety of approaches that can be used in the classroom in all subject areas. The aim is to encourage students to engage in meaningful ways with words – to have fun, to be curious and to explore new vocabulary so that they ‘own’ these words, and the word gap is narrowed.

They are best embedded in the content of the lesson as part of the development of a student’s specialist language, rather than the sole focus of a discrete vocabulary lesson. They also work well to support revision, independent study and homework.

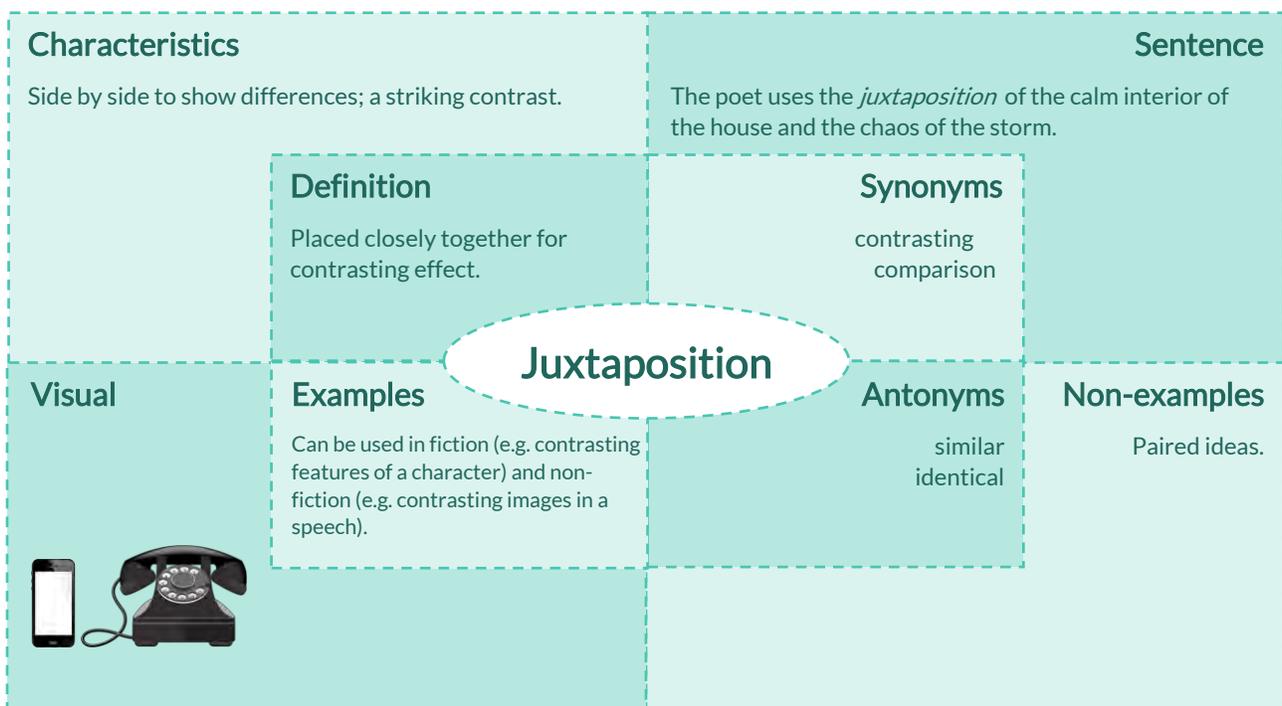
A blank version of each template has been included for you to use and adapt, along with some vocabulary development teaching ideas.

# Frayer Model Template (1)

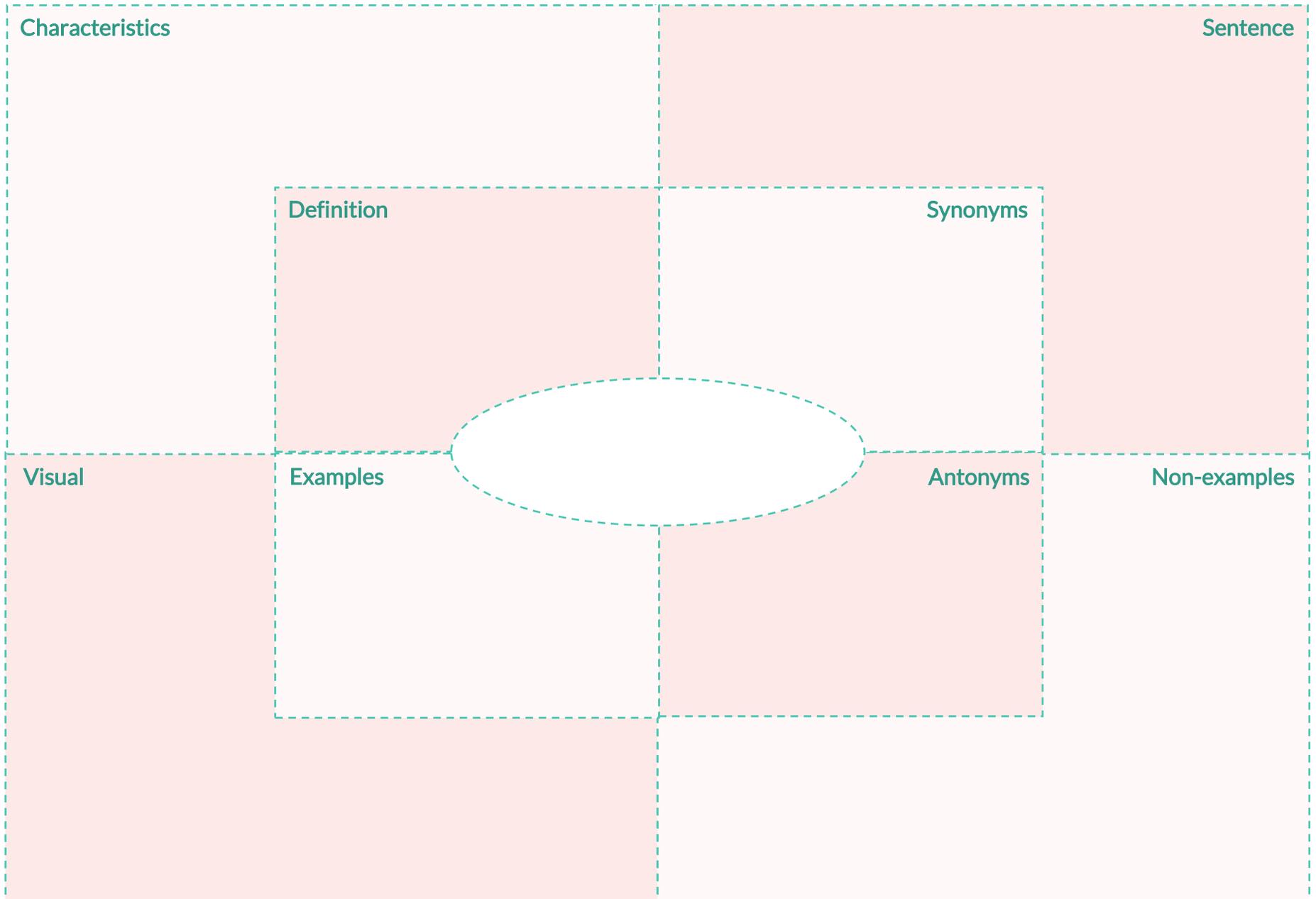
## Teaching Ideas:

This template supports the detailed exploration of complex Tier 3 words and allows students to think about the subtle differences between words.

- Set students a Frayer word challenge. Display a series of Frayer Model diagrams, partly filled in (for example, the characteristics sections) and the students must work in pairs to populate the other sections.
- Create a dynamic classroom display or vocab wall, adding Frayer Model diagrams each time you encounter new or unfamiliar words. Work collaboratively as a class to complete the diagram and welcome everyone's input.
- Higher achieving students could create a set of Frayer Model diagrams of key words at the end of a unit of work. The diagrams could be shared with the class as a study set, or used in lessons in a variety of ways – i.e., guess the vocabulary word or play a game of Pictionary.



Example Frayer Model for the word "juxtaposition" in English.

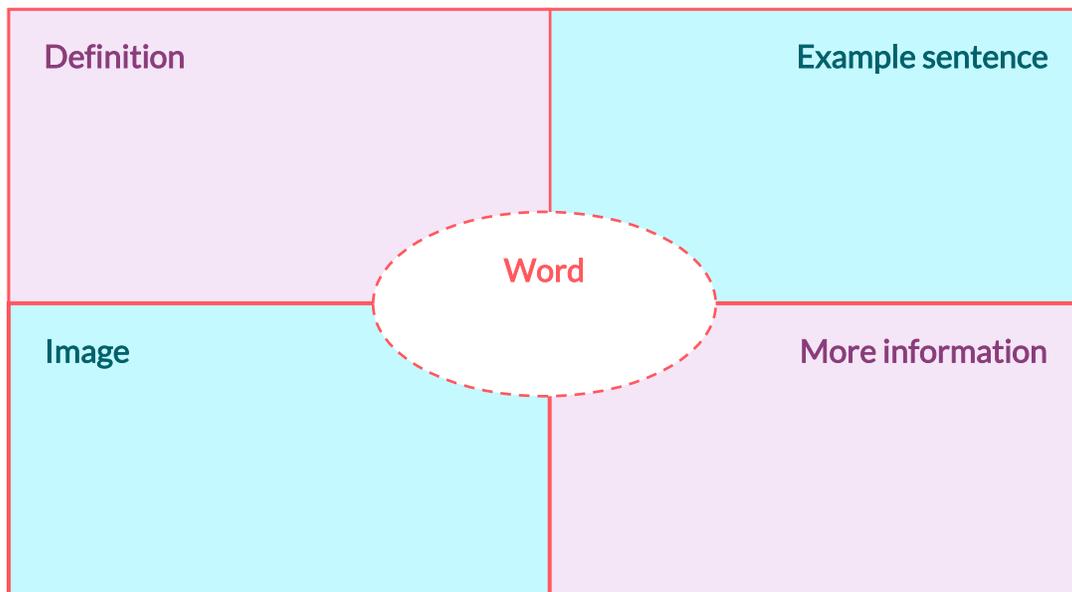


# Frayer Model Template (2)

## Teaching Ideas:

This version of the Frayer diagram has been simplified to make it more accessible as an introductory activity.

- The shape of this diagram lends itself to a jigsaw-style activity. Create a series of Frayer diagrams for five key words and cut them into the five sections (Definition, Visual, Sentence, Word and More information). Students could then work in groups to put the diagrams back together.
- Laminate a series of filled diagrams for tricky Tier 2 or 3 words and use them as placemats to support students during lessons. Alternatively put the diagrams inside a binder in the middle of tables, and use as a portable glossary to provide additional support for students.
- Give students a filled template with the word missing from the center (and with a gap in the Example sentence) and ask them to guess the missing word. This could be done in teams with groups racing to guess all the words first, with the teacher handing out the next sheet only when they have the correct answer. This works best if the sheets are a different color for each team.



<p>Definition</p>	<p>Example sentence</p>
<p>Image</p>	<p>More information</p>

**Word**

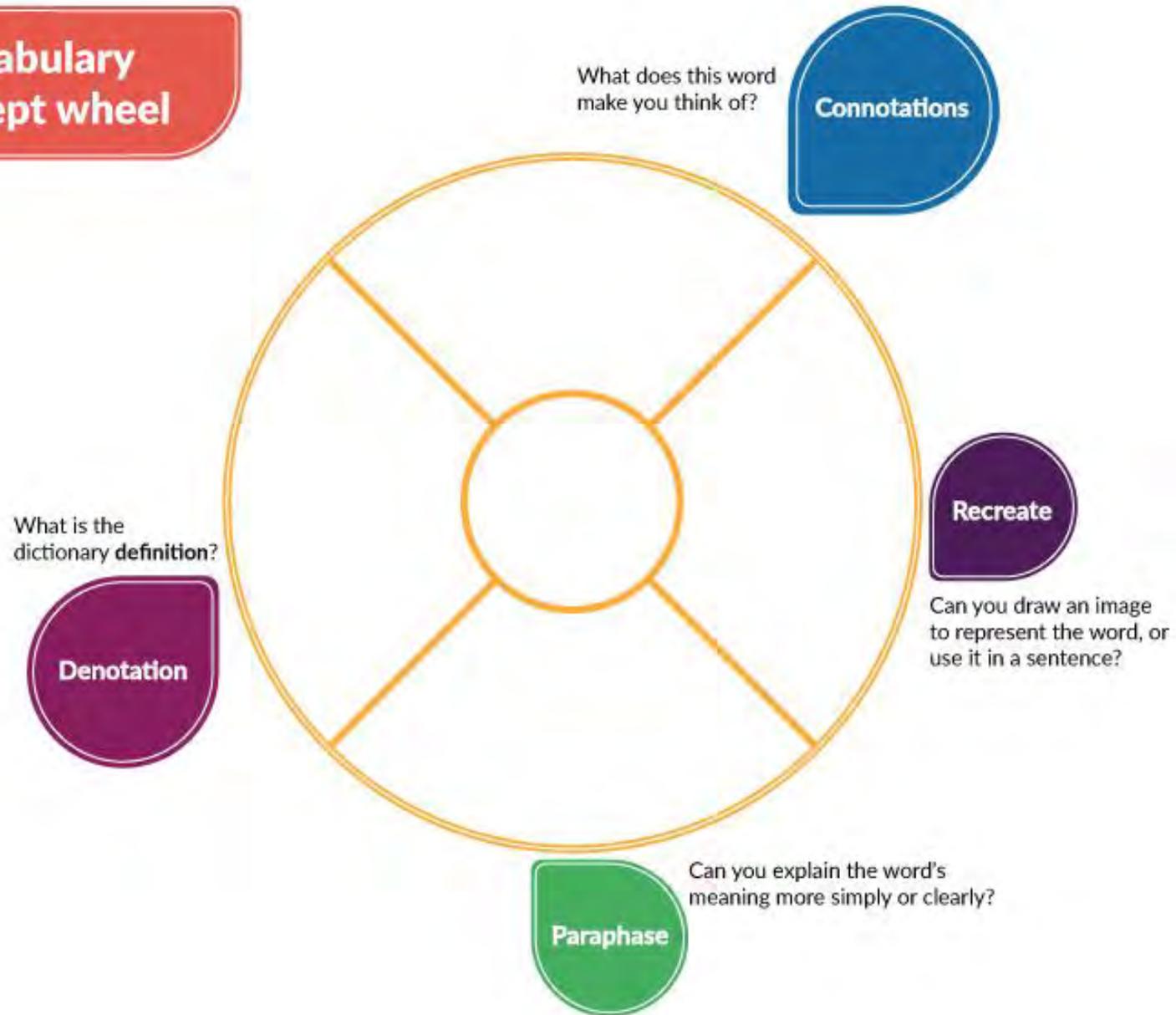
# Vocabulary Wheel Template

## Teaching Ideas:

Similar to the Frayer Model, this template offers a range of creative possibilities. It encourages students to connect the vocabulary word to their prior knowledge and understanding, and to explore its connotations.

- The strong visual element of this template would work well in a display. Provide the class with a glossary as a starting point and ask them to pick the four words they are least familiar with. Have them fill in the templates for homework and include the best in a classroom display.
- Alternatively, cut out the filled-in circles and create a series of word mobiles for your classroom.
- Using this template as a starting point, ask students to create their own version for homework, with their own choice of shapes and icons.

# Vocabulary concept wheel

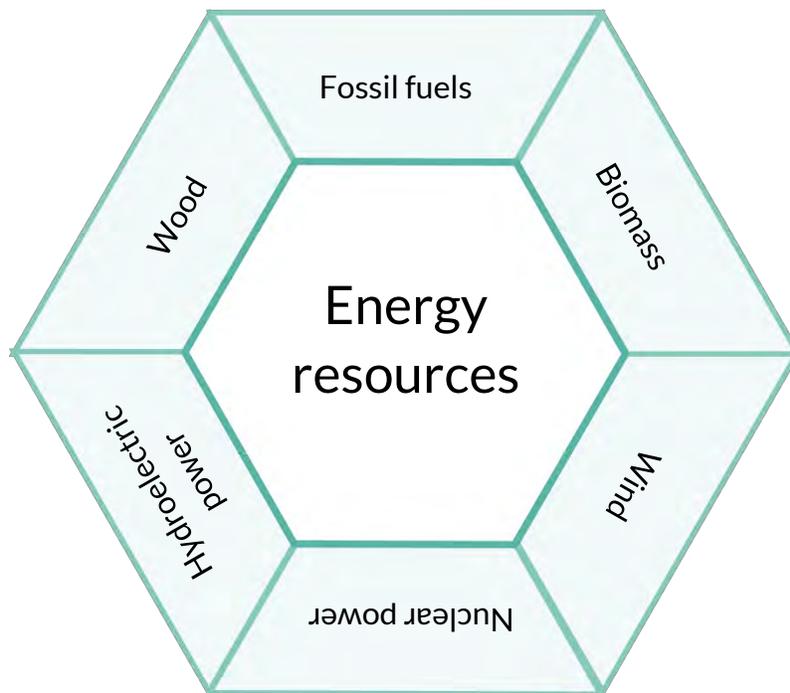


# Hexagon Reveal Template

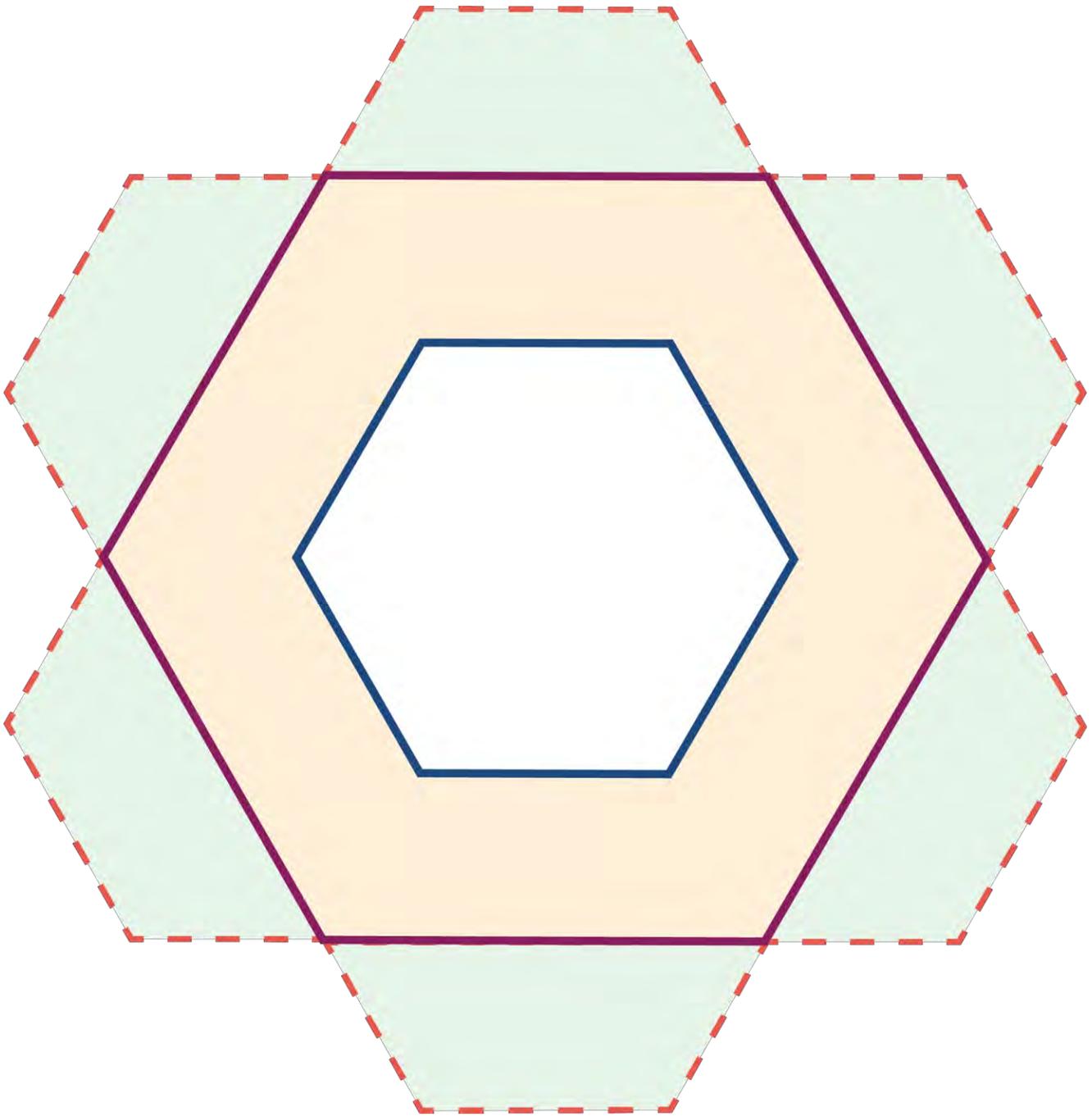
## Teaching Ideas:

This template offers a fun and effective way to focus on a small group of words for a particular topic, theme or unit of work.

- Students could create their own hexagon study aid by folding the paper and adding six key words and definitions from a unit. The folded flaps allow students to test themselves or a partner and then reveal the answer. Alternatively, number each word flap from 1-6. Then have students roll a die, and test each other remembering the definition/example of the word that matches their number. The answers can then be checked by lifting the flap.
- This template could be used to record a root/prefix/suffix (in the center) and then give examples of different words that use the root/prefix/suffix around the outside flaps.
- The completed hexagons could be used for a quick assessment or warm-up activity, with students working in pairs and testing each other's understanding of the six key words.



*Science energy template example.*

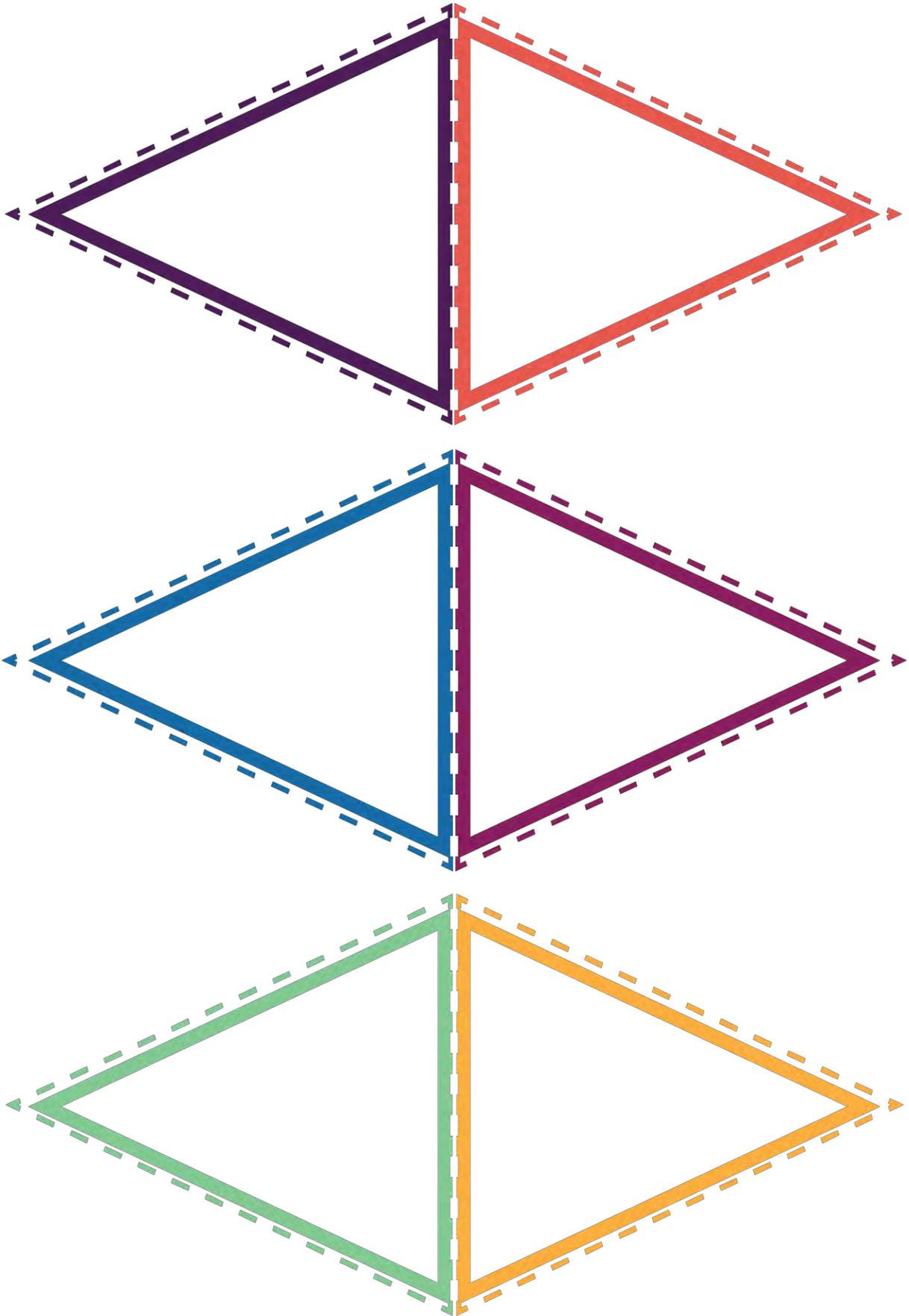


# Word Banner Template

## Teaching Ideas:

Use this classroom display template to consolidate students' vocabulary development over the long term. The banner can be temporarily pinned up over some string or taken home as a memory aid.

- Each flag could display a vocabulary word and a definition or image. Use the two sides of the flags for synonyms and antonyms, or root words with subject-specific example words. Encourage students to create their own string of word flags for homework as part of their vocabulary study.
- Create whole-classroom displays to connect core vocabulary. For example, pairs of students could be given a particular geographical period (like the Mesozoic era). They must create their banner flags and then work together as a class to put them in chronological or sequential order. Alternatively, use the flags to create a display of conjunctions and linking words to improve sentences and essay writing.
- The banners could be used to display academic words and their meanings. Students could then be encouraged to use these when answering/asking questions in class.



# Word Frame Template

## Teaching Ideas:

This is a quirky but useful way to get students to incorporate vocabulary words in their own writing. These templates work well for reuse when photocopied onto card stock or laminated for strength.

- This template is useful at the start of the writing process, as a reminder of what words/phrases to include (for example, when writing up a practical experiment in science). Students make their own frame with their choice of words written on the edge.
- The frame could be placed over a test answer and used as a reminder of key words when students are reworking their answer (e.g., in an extended history test answer). The frames could also be tailored for individual test prep, with phrases from the grading criteria written in the frame.
- Writing frames could be placed over a completed answer before being marked by the teacher, giving students a chance to reflect on their work. Or, as a peer assessment task, students could each other's vocabulary choices against the suggestions in the frame, or use the self/peer assessment frame provided on page 16.

# Self/peer assessment marking tips

**Go on** (add further detail)

**?** (doesn't make sense)

**p** (new paragraph needed)

**Cut** (unnecessary)

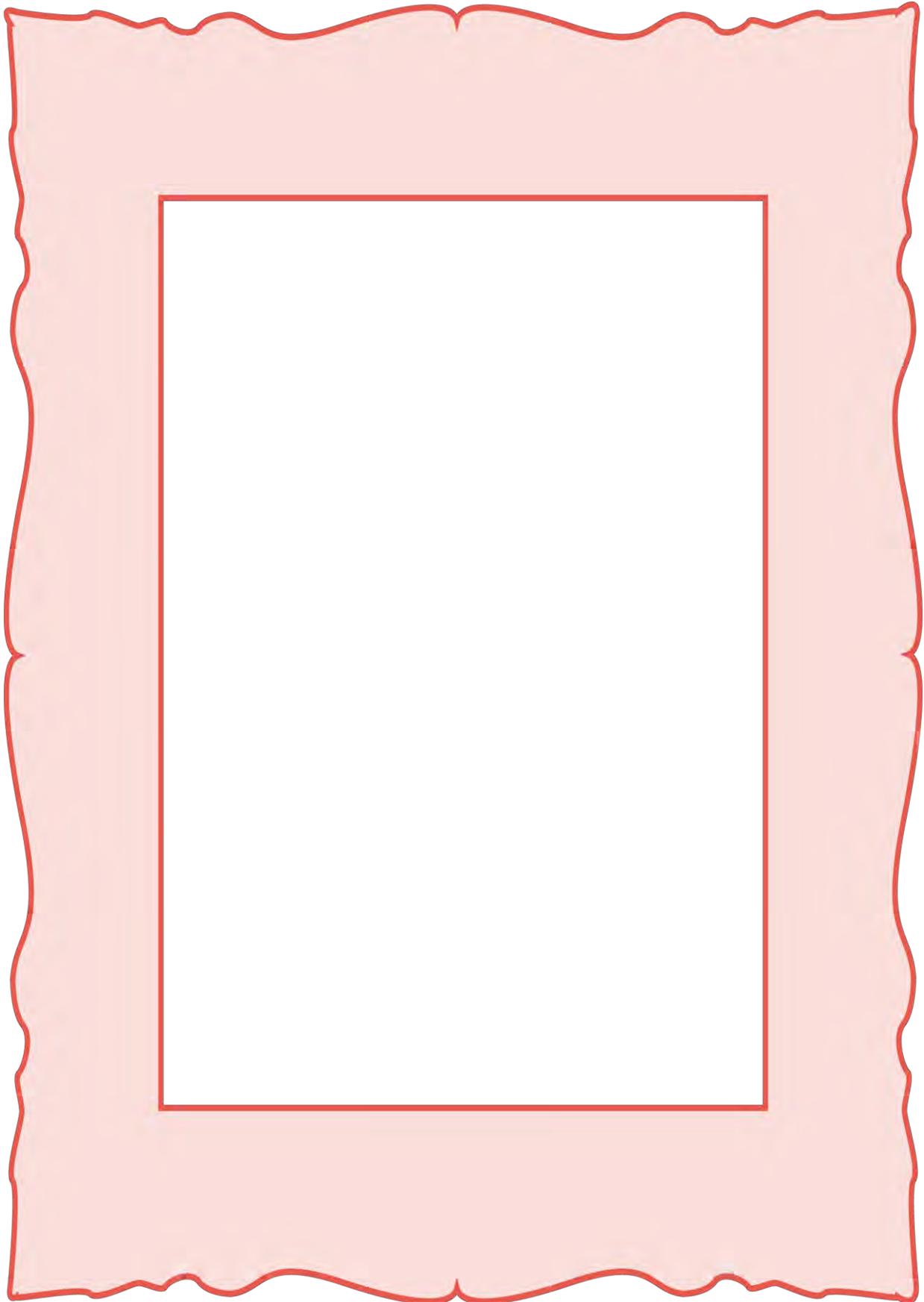
**Sp** (spelling mistake)

**“** (add quotation marks)

**Term** (needs a key word added)

**EBI** (even better if)

**WWW** (what went well)



# Word Bookmarks Template

## Teaching Ideas:

This flexible template can be updated by students frequently. The titles at the top of the templates provide suggestions for using bookmarks: as reminders of “tricky” words that students often forget; or as a way to celebrate new vocabulary; record new terms in any subject, or focus on test vocabulary, etc.

- Students could use the bookmarks during reading sessions of more extended texts, to support them when encountering new words. For example, during homework or practice tests, students could keep their word bookmarks inside their notebooks, adding a list of tricky words as they study.
- The bookmarks could be cross-curricular and taken out in every lesson to support the use of more formal and academic words.
- The bookmarks could also double up as study aids, with the definitions on one side and the words on the other. Students could work in pairs and quiz each other on key terms.

**My tricky words**


**Exam words**


**New words**


**My favourite words**


# Word Dice Template

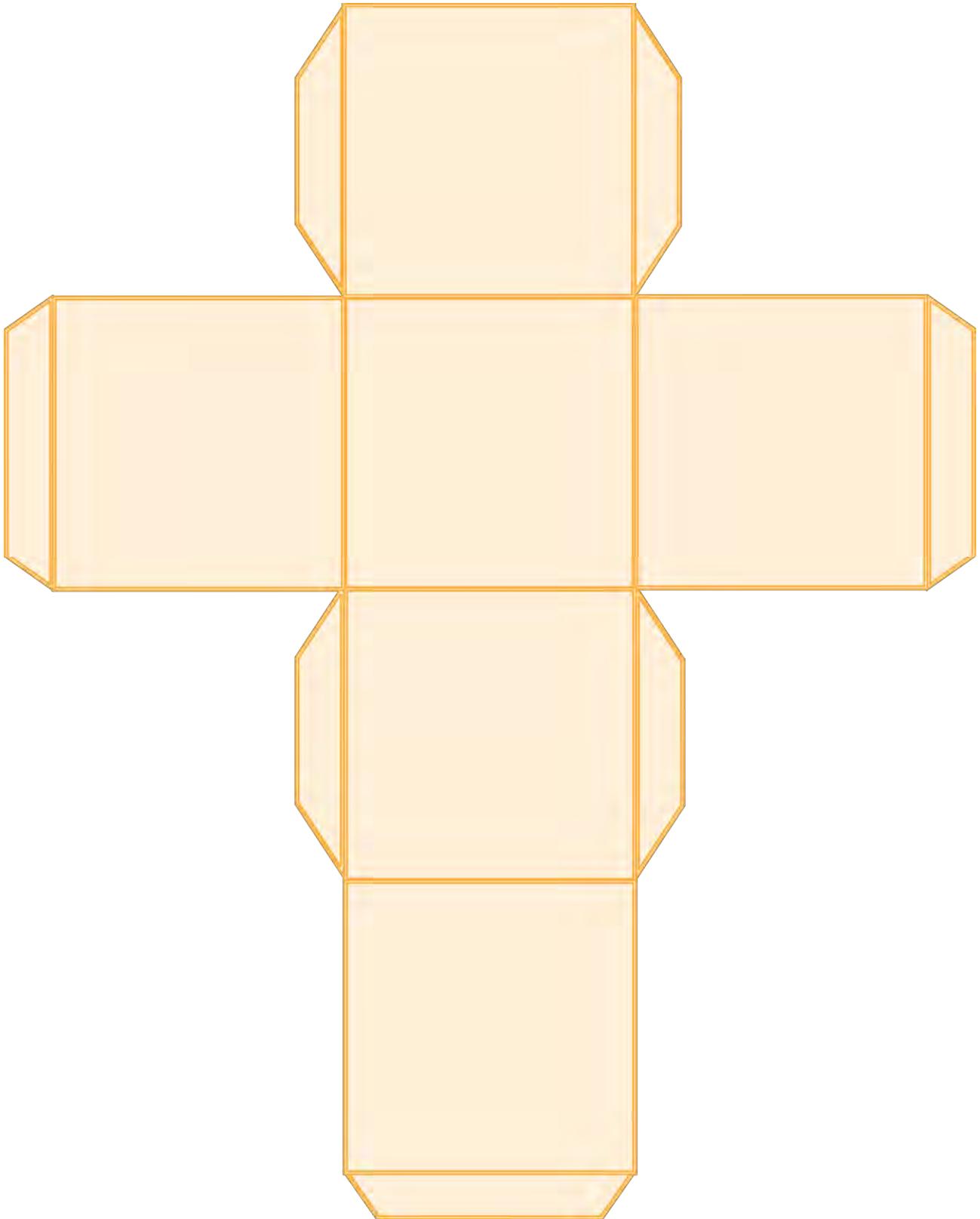
## Teaching Ideas:

This is a fun, 3D approach to engaging with key vocabulary words. The template should be written on before assembling as a dice-style cube. Six words or images (or both for dual coding) can be added to each side.

- Each student should choose six vocabulary words or topics and write them on the sides of the cube template. Working in pairs, they take turns rolling their dice together – and then think of a sentence that links the two words on the separate faces.
- Give the students a table of vocabulary words, with room to write notes about each. The cube could have the following words on its six faces:
  - Give a synonym for the word.
  - Give a definition of the word.
  - Give a sentence with the word in it.
  - Give an antonym of the word.
  - Do a doodle of the word.
  - Cover and spell the word.

Students take turns rolling the cube and work through the key words in their table, completing the face-side-up tasks on each roll.

- Ask students to create their own subject vocabulary game for homework, using the Word Dice template as their starting point. Share the best ideas in the next lesson.

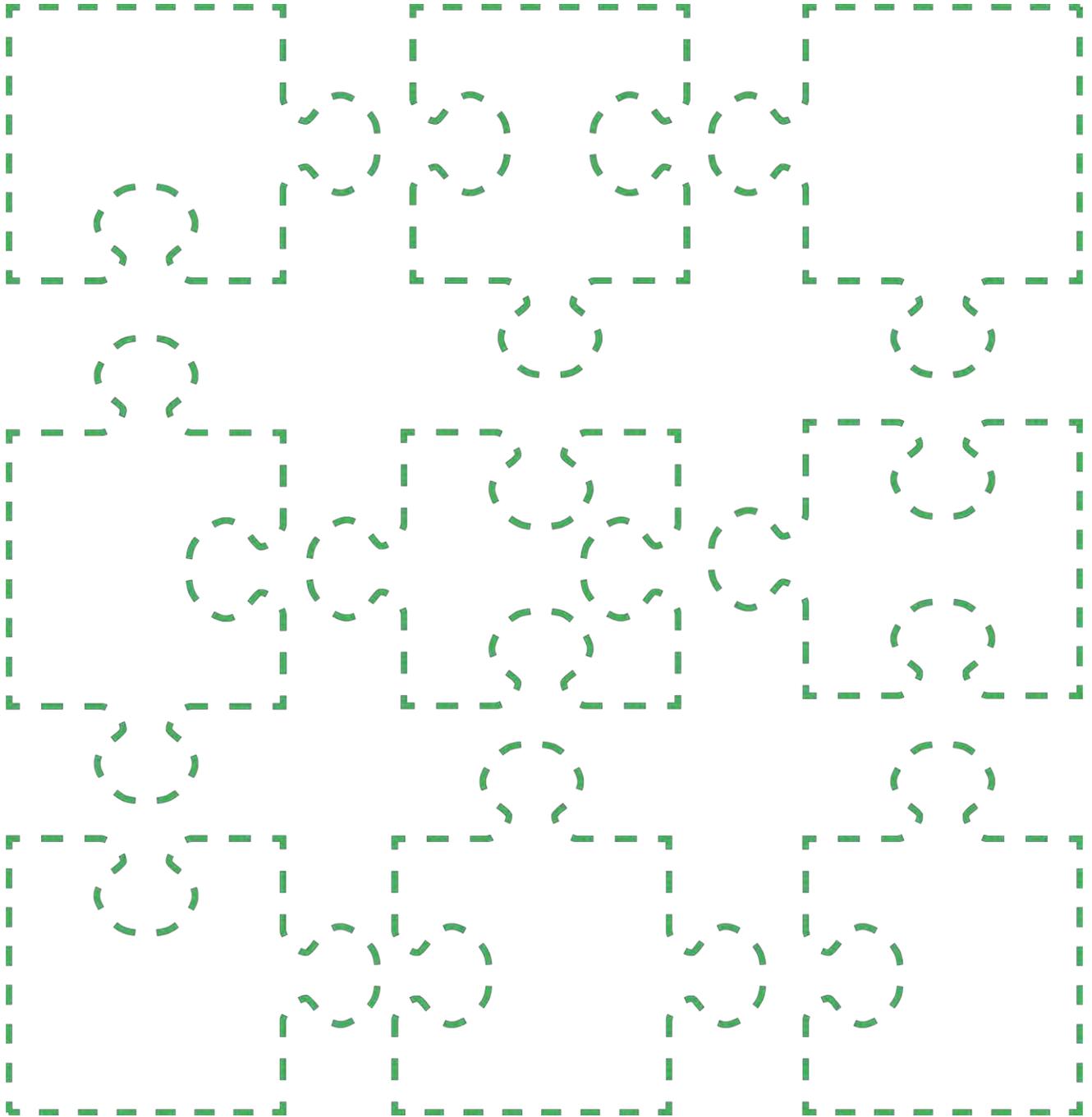


# Word Jigsaw Template

## Teaching Ideas:

This template provides a strong, visual reminder of how words and concepts link together.

- Give students a template with three of the jigsaw pieces filled in with key words or phrases. They must fill in the other pieces with words that connect to all the joining words.
- Give the students the template with all the pieces filled in, apart from the center piece, which has the vocabulary or topic word on it. They must work out what term all these key words link to.
- For an extra challenge, make the jigsaw puzzle double-sided, with the word on one side and the definition on the other. This could be used for a quick quiz or as a study tool. Alternatively, create multiple jigsaws (e.g., on four characters from a reading assignment or four related topics) and then hand out the mixed-up pieces to a group of four students. Challenge them to join the different puzzle pieces to recreate the four complete jigsaws, and explain their choices to other groups during the assessment.



# Graphic Organizer Template

## Teaching Ideas:

Here are two flexible general-purpose templates for organizing knowledge. Students can use these to map the key words and content across a subject/unit and to create glossaries as they study. Or, they can be given a filled-in organizer at the start of their unit of work.

- These templates support self-quizzing and assessment in lessons. They can also be useful for giving students the “bigger picture” and reminding them to make links between content and topics.
- Encourage students to map their knowledge on a unit/theme/curriculum focus/essay. Ask them to include visual elements such as timelines for history topics and diagrams for science.
- Ask students to create a list of questions, using the organizers to supply the answer, or use them for a range of quizzes.



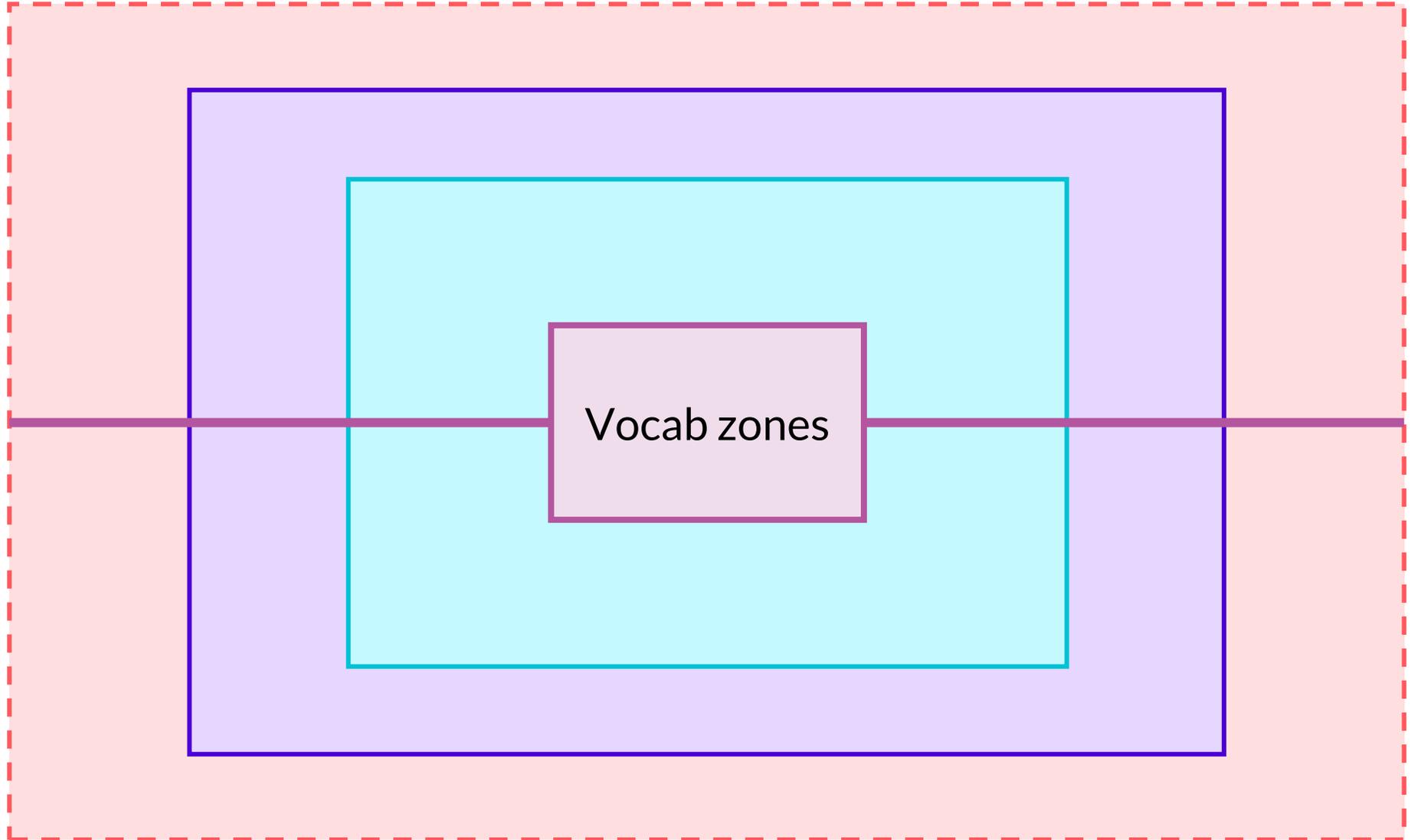


# Vocab Zones Template

## Teaching Ideas:

The Vocab Zones template can help students chart their own subject-specific vocabulary development over a topic or year.

- At the start and end of each topic, unit or term, students could fill in the template, using the three zones to summarize and organize core vocabulary with the central zone being the most relevant/important. This word map could then be used in a range of ways in lessons. Working in pairs, they could choose three words to define or paraphrase for a partner. Or at the end of a lesson, they could share their favorite word/s with the class.
- Change the headings for the three zones and you have a template for useful Tier 1, 2 and 3 words in your subject. Or give it test-prep or essay-writing focus and write instructional words in the first zone, key vocabulary in the second zone and useful connecting words and phrases in the third zone. Use the template for studying, using the dividing line to focus on charting everything students can remember about the topic above the line, and all the key terms (with definitions when appropriate) they can't easily recall below the line.
- Give it a self-assessment focus and change the headings to "Words I am confident using," "Words I would like/need to find out more about," and "Words I don't understand."

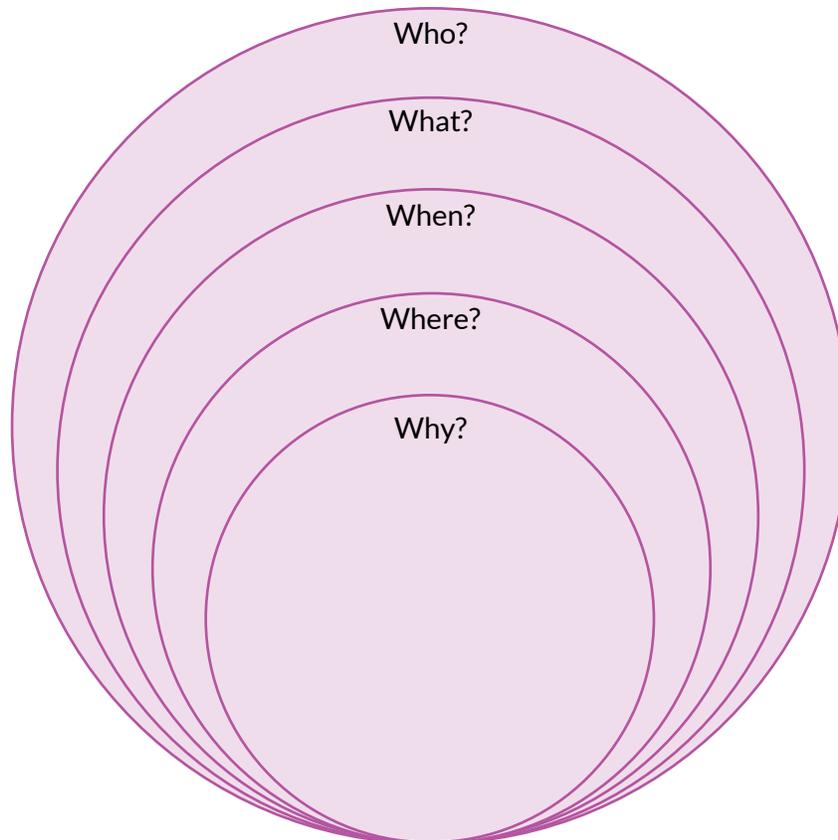


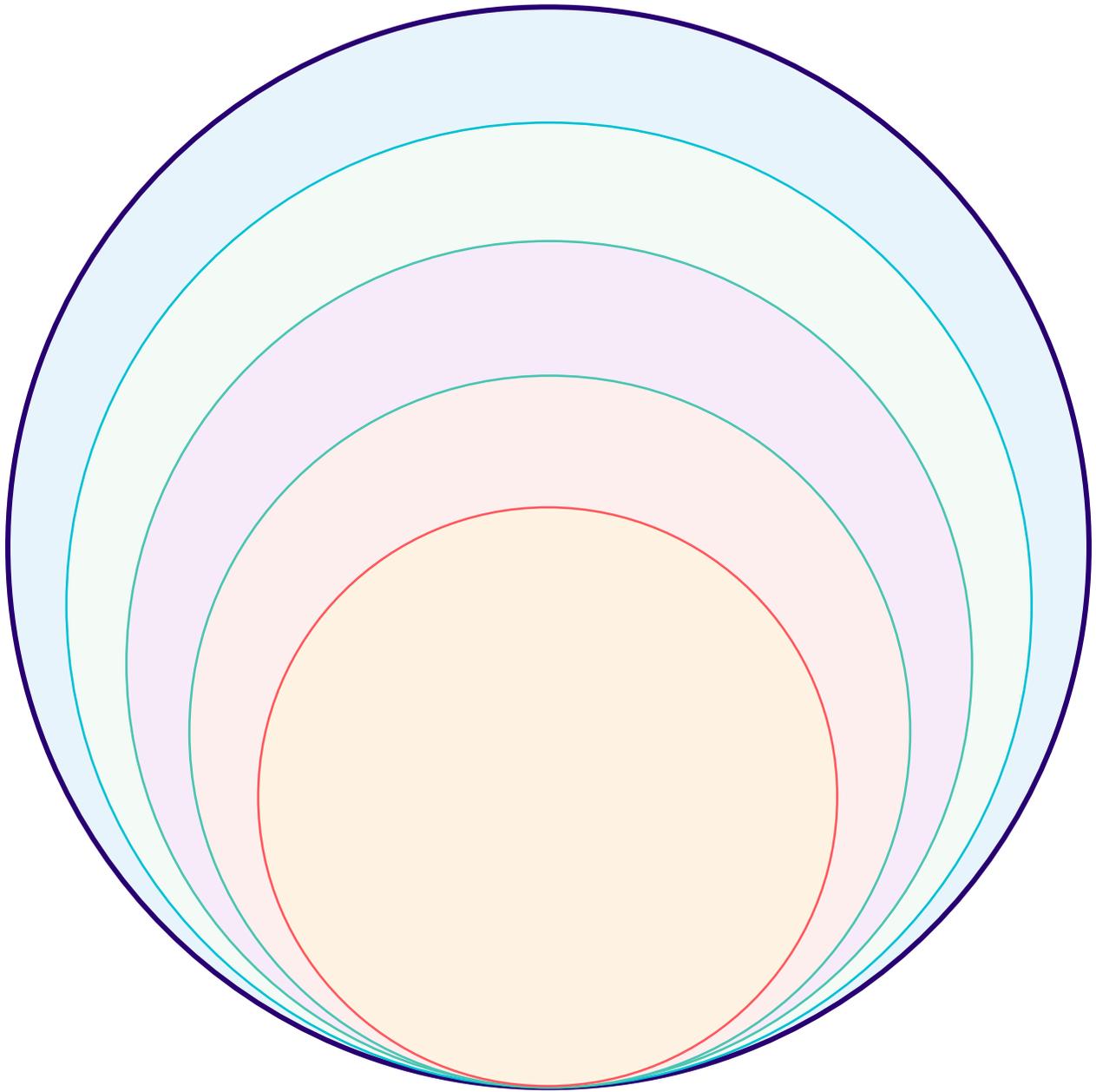
# Oyster Template

## Teaching Ideas:

A visually appealing alternative to the vocab zones template, you can also use this template to create a summary of key or new vocabulary in your subject.

- Use the circles to rank words in order of importance, with the most important words in the biggest circles. Alternatively, keep it simple and use it to celebrate favorite words.
- Encourage students to use color-coding or RAG (red, amber, green) codes for the different circles to group words and show their confidence level or understanding of key vocabulary. Alternatively, use the 5Ws (*who, what, where, when, why*) to define a word's uses.
- Explore a new word, using each circle to define different features in a given category. Choose these circle categories as a class. Ideas might include root words, definitions, relevant synonyms, pronunciation tips or sample sentences that demonstrate how to use the word.



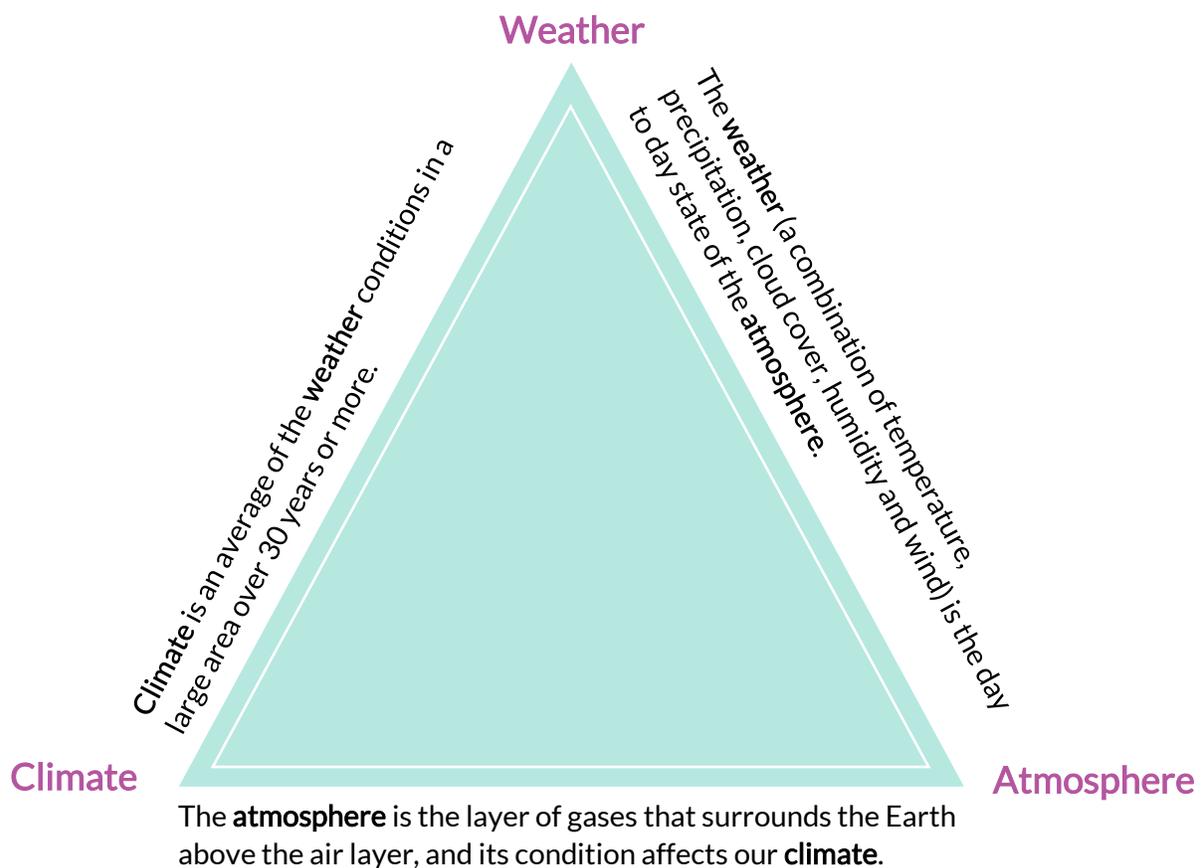


# Shape-Linking Template

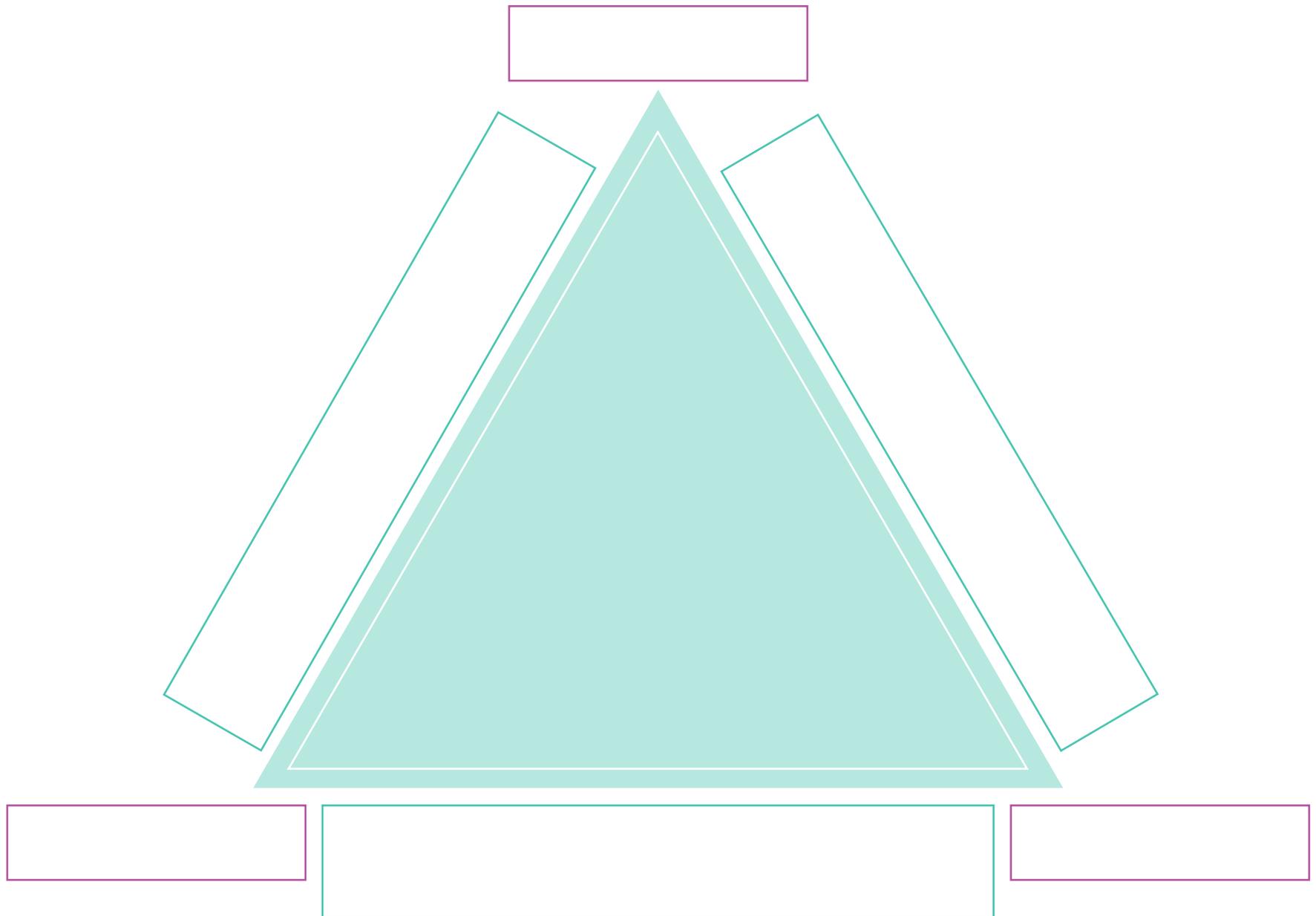
## Teaching Ideas:

This is a simple but effective idea for linking three or more vocabulary words. Using a triangle shape, students select three connected or topic words and write them in the word boxes at the points of the triangle. Along the edge of each side of the triangle, they write a sentence that uses both words.

- As an extension or homework task, change the shape to a square or pentagon to link more words or to write a paragraph on the topic.
- For studying or test practice, make this a timed writing activity.
- Challenge students to use the inside of the shape to write down as many related words as they can think of. Extend this task to develop students' oral skills – how many of the words inside the shape can they define or put in a sentence?



*Geography weather shape link example.*



# Vocab Spinner Template

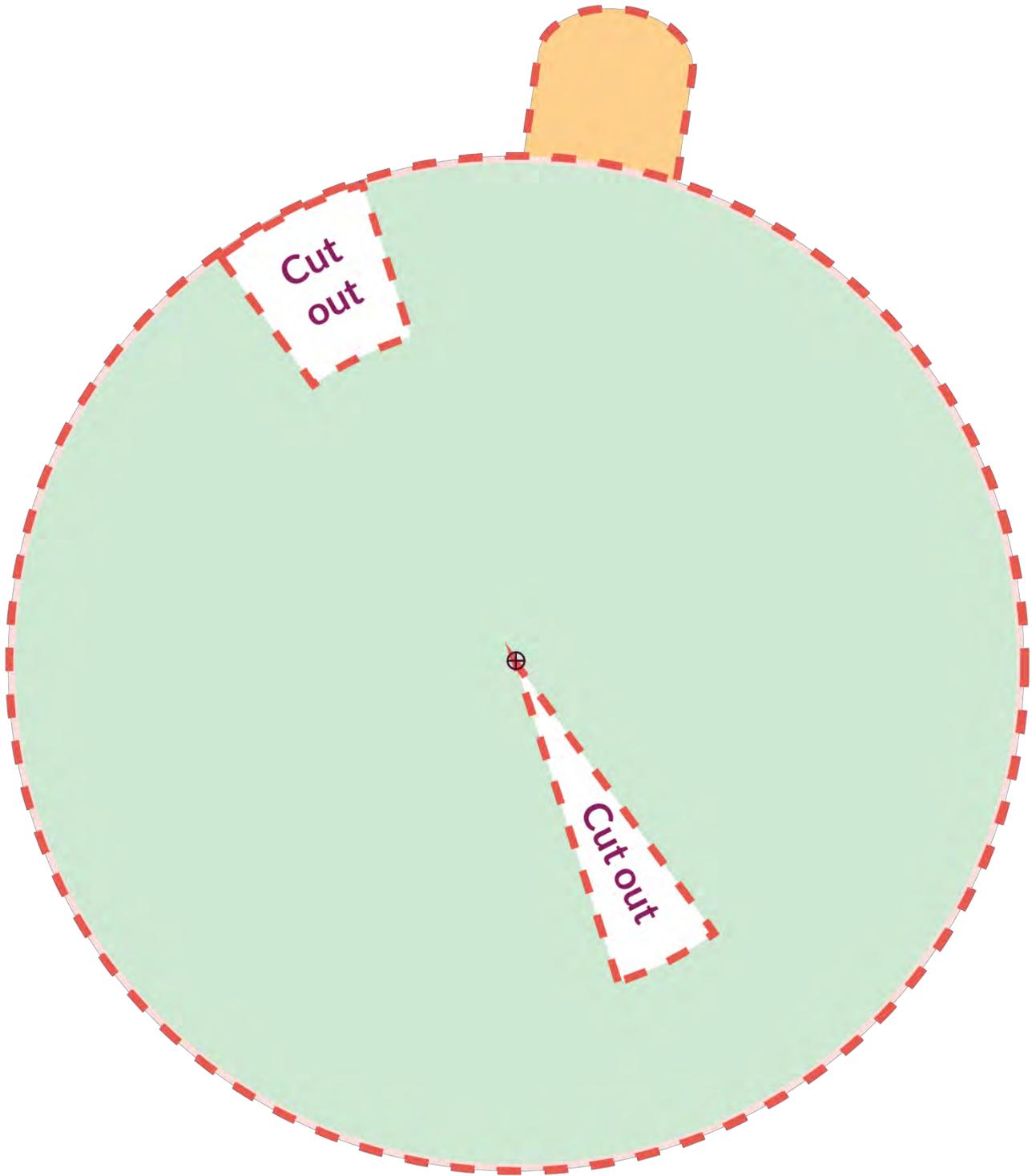
## Teaching Ideas:

This flexible vocabulary spinner helps students make meaningful connections between words and definitions. Use a paper fastener to connect the two layers and spin the top layer to reveal the key word and definition.

- Use this for instructional words in your subject. Students could create their own version, with student-friendly definitions around the edge.
- Give students a blank spinner and a challenge – to make their own key word study spinner, focusing on the words and definitions they need to learn.
- Adapt it as a vocabulary game template, with ideas for preliminary, assessment and confidence-building activities. Compile a list of subject or topic vocabulary in the key word section, with ideas for vocabulary activities in the definition space i.e.

**Key word:** Hippocrates

**Task:** Explain this word to a partner in 15 seconds or less.



## Mathematics command words: add your definitions

