Vocabulary Recycling – *The New York Times*' Word of the Day

What is it?

The Language in Use exams (Intermediate and Advanced) include one task based on entries from *The New York Times*'s Word of the Day, which can be found here. The *NYT*'s Word of the Day is freely available to anyone, but please note that the *NYT* also grants complimentary access to anyone associated with Saarland University, so you may well want to create an account[1] to get access to some high-quality journalism!

The *NYT*'s Word of the Day consists of a single-word entry published most weekdays of the year, followed by a definition (in English) and an example of the word used in context in an *NYT* article.

How is this tested in the Language in Use exams?

One of the tasks (worth approx. 5 to 6 points) in the LiU exams is based on word entries published during the semester preceding the exams. The exams at the end of the summer semester may include any of the words published between **1st May and 30th June** (inclusive), and the exams at the end of the winter semester any of the words published between **1st November and 10th January** (inclusive). The task follows the standard format you will be familiar with from previous exams you have seen (see here; enrolment key: LandUmocks).

It is up to you to decide how you want to study for this task, but we **strongly recommend** revising the words on a regular basis (ideally every day!) rather than trying to cram everything shortly before the date of the respective exam. The best way to learn new vocabulary is by using a method called "spaced repetition". Spaced repetition means reviewing new words again and again over increasing gaps of time. This helps move vocabulary into your long-term memory. Below you will find a sample nine-week study schedule for the *NYT*'s Word of the Day. Of course, you can amend this schedule to suit your individual learning preferences.

Instructions:

Starting on 1st May or 1st November, you will encounter a new word every weekday. Learn each word the day it appears and then review it again after 1 day, 3 days, 6 days, 12 days, 25 days, and 43 days. So if you learn a word on day 1, you review it on days 2, 4, 7, 13, 26, and 44.

Daily routine (10–15 minutes): read the *NYT* Word of the Day entry; then note down:

- the word and the date you read it
- the word's meaning according to the *NYT* as well as one additional dictionary (e.g. here or here)
- common collocations (see here or here)
- one original sentence

Then review any older words that are "due" that day by covering your definition and trying to:

- remember the meaning
- use the word in a sentence
- recall a synonym, antonym or collocation

[1] To register, **log in to Eduroam** or the university's VPN (it won't work otherwise) and click this link. Register with your UdS email address. Once registered, you can access the *NYT* from anywhere without having to be logged in to Eduroam.

Simple rule: if you remember the word easily, move it to the next review session; if you partly remember it, review it again the next day; if you do not remember it, restart the cycle from the beginning. For example, if the review plan is 1, 3, 6, 12, 25, 43 days and you completely forget a word at, say, the 12-day review, you send it back to the start and review it again after 1 day, then 3 days later, then 6 days later, and so on.

Weekly pattern across 9 weeks:

- Daily: learn the new *NYT* word and do due reviews
- End of each week: do a short quiz on that week's words plus a few older ones
- End of weeks 4 and 9: do a bigger cumulative review

This gives you one new word a day while repeatedly bringing older words back just before you are likely to forget them. Over nine weeks, you build a growing vocabulary set without cramming. If possible, try to find a study partner for the weekly quizzes and the cumulative reviews at the end of weeks 4 and 9.

You can use this Excel template to keep track of the words. Alternatively, create your own online list here.