

# The Waterfall Method of ACT/SAT Vocab Studying

Start with a stack of 30-50 vocab words.

Starting Stack



Review each card. If you know the definition right away, put it in a **Know It** pile. If you struggled to remember the definition, put it in a **Struggled** pile. You'll end up with two stacks of words:

Know It      Struggled



Pick up the Struggled pile, and repeat the process. This time the Struggled pile will have fewer words than your starting deck. Put the words you know this time around into a second Know It pile, and the words you're struggling with again in a new Struggled pile. Now you have three stacks:

Know It      Know It (2)      Struggled



Keep repeating this process until you end up with just 1-5 words in the last Struggled pile.

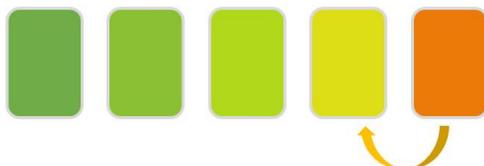
Know It      Know It (2)      Know It (3)      Know It (4)      Struggled



This method is called the Waterfall Method because we essentially have a cascading waterfall, where **words that are really hard for you keep tumbling into further and further piles.**

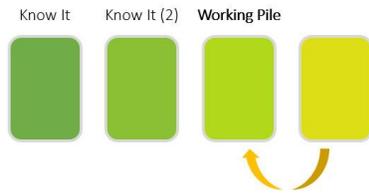
Theoretically, at this point you know nearly all the words in the entire set. Now we're going to **go back up the waterfall.** Combine the last Struggled pile with the last Know It pile. This will become your Working pile:

Know It      Know It (2)      Know It (3)      Working Pile



Now, review all the words in this pile. **If you forget any of the words in this pile, go through all of them again.** Yep - this is harsh, but it's the only way you're going to memorize all these words. You'll need to be strict about making sure you learn all of them.

If you remembered ALL the words in this pile, then combine this pile with the next highest pile.



At the very end, you'll end up with the starting stack. And you'll know every single word!

Starting Stack



## Why does this work?

The reason this method is so effective is that **you'll review the hardest words for you over 10 times more than easy words.**

Most students just go through vocab lists from front to back. They might already know half the words, but they spend equal time on words they know compared to words they don't know and really need to learn.

Now that you've read this, you'll be smarter - you'll concentrate way more on the hardest words.

Adapted from: <http://blog.prepscholar.com/the-best-way-to-study-sat-vocab-words>