Tips for Strengthening your Vocabulary

1. **Read, read, and read.** The more you read, the more new words you'll be exposed to. If you see a word you don’t know, try to do these things before using a dictionary to look the word up:
   a. See if you can find out the meaning of the word by reading the whole sentence. This is called learning from context
   b. If you still cannot fully understand the word, look it up in an English-English dictionary

2. **Keep a dictionary and thesaurus handy.** When you learn a new word, you can look it up in a dictionary, which will give you its definition and pronunciation. Use a thesaurus to find synonyms and antonyms for the word.
   a. Note: a synonym is a word that means the same thing. For example, a synonym for “good” could be “positive”
   b. Note: an antonym is a word that means the opposite. For example, the antonym “good” could be “bad”

3. **Use a journal.** It’s a good idea to keep a running list of the new words you discover so that you can refer to them and practice using them. This can help you stay organized. Some students like to keep a vocabulary journal for each subject they’re studying.

4. **Use Etymology to help understand new words.** Etymology focuses on the origin of words. The English language is made up of many different languages, including French, Italian, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Spanish, etc. Many English words are made up of prefixes, roots, and suffixes. A prefix is added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. A suffix is added to the end of a word to change its meaning. A root is the main part of the word.

   Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Word</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Root</th>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Bio/bios = Life</td>
<td>ology = the study of</td>
<td>Biology = The study of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway</td>
<td>Sub = under</td>
<td>Way = passage</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Subway = under passage/passage that is below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unkind</td>
<td>Un = not</td>
<td>Kind = friendly or pleasant</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Unkind = not kind, not friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudoscience</td>
<td>Pseudo = fake or false</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>Pseudoscience = Fake science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is a resource with many examples of prefixes, roots, and suffixes: http://www.betterendings.org/homeschool/words/root%20words.htm
5. **Find ways to practice.** If you keep a vocabulary journal, you can also try putting your vocabulary on index-cards/pieces of paper to help you remember. You can form study groups with other students who can help you practice.

Some people also find it helpful to play vocabulary games as a way of practicing using words accurately and building their vocabulary. There are many games you can plan online but also in newspapers (e.g. crossword puzzles), etc.

6. **Engage in conversations.** With all parts of language, we need to practice and use language in order to help us learn and remember. Simple things like talking to other people, forming a conversation group, and making sure you try to use new words in sentences will help you practice and remember. The more you use new vocabulary and practice its use in day-to-day conversations, the easier remembering and using new words will be.