Using WordQ in the Classroom

WordQ 5 for Windows

2. Topic Research and Vocabulary Building

Students are regularly assigned essays and reports on subjects in which they may have little advance knowledge. And a general internet search on a new topic can be overwhelming, both in terms of the sheer amount of information presented and in the number of novel terms. WordQ has several built-in facilities to assist with creating and using vocabulary lists for unfamiliar topics. As we'll see in this tutorial, these vocabulary lists can be used to drive deeper research into the topic or to facilitate the writing process itself.

Before completing this tutorial, it would be useful to have already completed the "Basic Operation" tutorial, which introduces many of the writing supports built into WordQ.
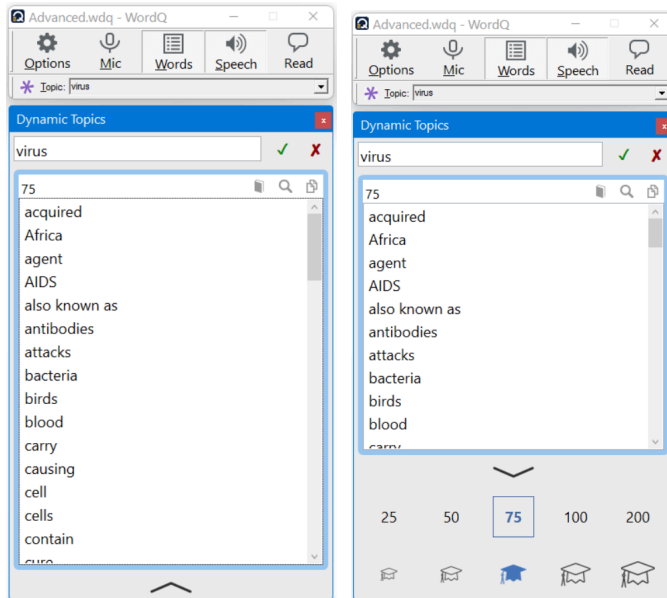
ThoughtQ Dynamic Topics for Prediction and Research

WordQ includes an on-demand topical word generator[1] called ThoughtQ® Dynamic Topics. The student can enter a keyword or phrase and ThoughtQ will produce a list of associated words and phrases for the student's consideration. While working with the list, students can have words spoken aloud, get word definitions, and search for information about these words as they relate to the topic.

Let's try ThoughtQ. Click on the ✳ **ThoughtQ** button in the bottom left corner of the WordQ buttonbar. A Dynamics Topic window will appear below. Type a topical keyword/phrase into the box at the top it, e.g., "**virus**", and then press RETURN or click on the ✔ button. You should see a list of related words and phrases appear in a list after a second or so. Initially, 75 topic words/phrases at an average academic level will be displayed, but this can be changed. Click the ⌃ **Up** arrow button at the bottom to show options (see diagram below). The first row of revealed buttons controls the maximum number of words shown in the list. The second row of buttons controls the rough difficulty level of words, with the words increasing in sophistication

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[1] U.S. Patent 8,335,787

as you select buttons further to the right. Try different combinations of buttons and see the impact on the words in the list. When done experimenting with these options, you can click the ⌄ **Down** arrow button to hide them.

With the topic active, click back in your document. Type the phrase, "**An RNA virus is a virus that includes ribonucleic acid**." Notice that words and phrases from the ThoughtQ list are more likely to be predicted than usual, and when predicted, they are shown in a violet color. For example, with the previous sentence, you should have seen the words "**RNA**", "**virus**", and "**ribonucleic acid**" appear in a violet color and appear relatively quickly. WordQ's word prediction facility will emphasize any list of words in the topical pane to make it easier to use those words.

At any time, you can change to a new topic by entering a new topical keyword/phrase. You can click the ✖ **Clear** button to clear the topic words/phrases. And you can have WordQ go back to regular word prediction without emphasizing the topic by hiding the topic list by toggling the ✳ **ThoughtQ** button.

Research with ThoughtQ

ThoughtQ Dynamic topics aims to help students do their initial research by helping them think outside of their own language box. Starting with an initial word or phrase that describes the topic that they want to learn about, ThoughtQ offers a list of words that others have used when writing in that area. These words can be thought of as "thought triggers" associated with that

key word or phrase. Some words may not seem directly related to what they know about a topic, but it is often the unusual words that students don't expect that lead to the most interesting discoveries about that topic, which in turn can lead to angles for inquiry that would not have come up without those triggers.

ThoughtQ offers several tools that can be used on word lists to help a student dig deeper. You should notice that any word or phrase in the list that you hover over will be spoken aloud for reading assistance. To get a definition of a word, select a topic word from ThoughtQ and click the ▌ **Define** button. Your default internet browser will open with a definition of the word. To search and discover related information, select one or more words from the ThoughtQ list and click the 🔍 **Search** button. (Use CTRL+click and SHIFT+click for multiple selections.) The Google browser will open with results related to topic keyword + topic word(s).

For example, go back to the ThoughtQ-generated word list for "**Virus**", and select "**RNA**" (a term many students may not know) and click 🔍 **Search**. Your default internet browser will open with relevant web pages related to viruses and RNA. You may learn that people are interested in whether coronavirus is an RNA virus.

Try out different searches with various topic words and see what you discover.

With ThoughtQ there is no single best answer offered. Rather, it offers some possible guideposts to help a student explore a topic for themselves. As the student uses those sample topical words to delve more deeply into the topic, they will hopefully find facets of the topic that capture their interest and make them want to read more.

Static Topic or Word Bank

While ThoughtQ generates topical lists dynamically with little more than a key word or phrase, there are time when students may want to develop their own vocabulary list (or word bank) by hand. WordQ's static topic facility helps the student do exactly that. A static topic is a list of words or short phrases that a student creates themselves and customizes for use when writing about a topic. They are emphasized in the word prediction when a topic is active. These hand-generated lists are stored with the student's personal WordQ settings.

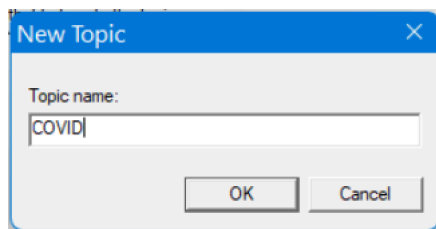A static topic words can be added to a topic in several ways:

- one-by-one
- from a list in a text file

- from text copied to the clipboard, or

Static topics are different from the automatically generated topic lists of ThoughtQ in that they are hand-curated by the student, and therefore, can be more specific to the student's needs.

Say, for example, that a student is writing about COVID and needs more specific language related to COVID symptoms, care and treatment beyond the virus terms provided by ThoughtQ. Topic words can be imported from a website to help build the word bank on this topic.

In WordQ, click on the **Options** button and choose **My Words…** and then click on the **Topics** tab. In this dialog, click on **New…** Type in a "COVID" as a Topic Name in the pop-up dialog followed by clicking **OK**.

At this point, words can be added manually if desired, via a **New word:** edit box, but we are going to import an initial set of topic words from a web page.

Open a new tab in your browser type go to this URL: https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-covid-19 and click on the link to show "**What are the symptoms of COVID-19**." Then select and copy (CTRL+C) the list of symptoms shown there.
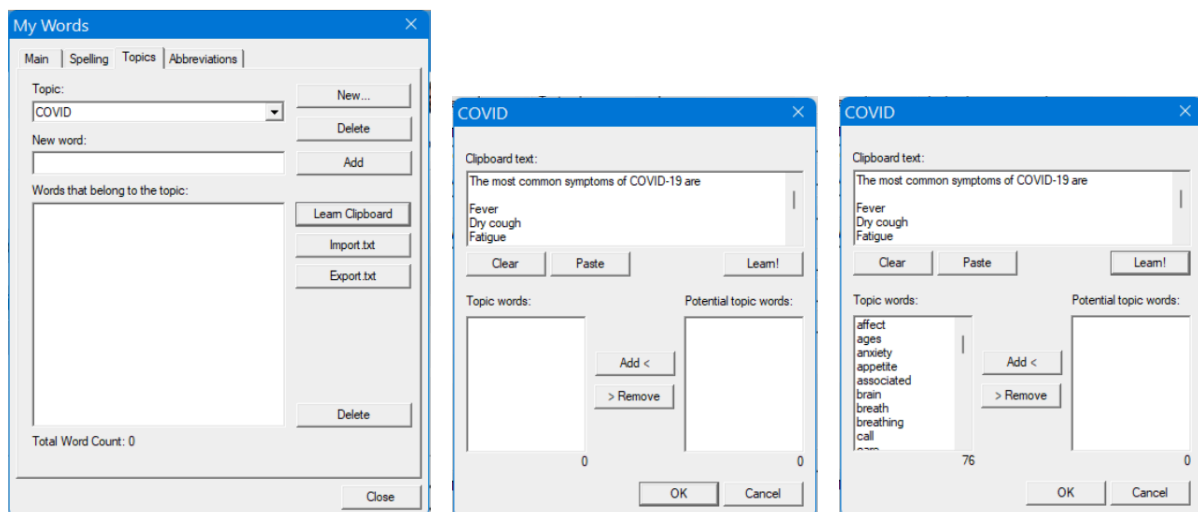
The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Fatigue

Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include:
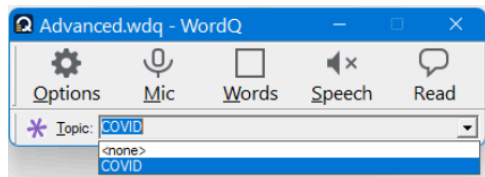
- Loss of taste or smell,
- Nasal congestion,
- Conjunctivitis (also known as red eyes)
- Sore throat,
- Headache,
- Muscle or joint pain,
- Different types of skin rash,
- Nausea or vomiting,
- Diarrhea,
- Chills or dizziness.

Now switch back to the WordQ buttonbar where the **My Words>Topic** dialog should still be visible. On the right side of this dialog, click on the **Learn Clipboard** button, and the text that you had copied will now appear in a new dialog. Now click on the **Learn!** Button and you will see topic words automatically extracted on the left-hand side list.

Note that WordQ will extract up to 150 topic words automatically at one time. More words can be added from other documents. Words outside of WordQ's dictionary, which may include misspellings, are separated in the **Potential topic words** list for the student to add if desired.

After clicking on the **OK** button, followed by clicking on the **My Words** dialog's **Close** button, COVID will be listed as an available topic under WordQ's **Topic** dropdown list. Choose it to make it active.

Now when you type out a sentence discussing symptoms of COVID, those topic words will be emphasized and shown in a violet color in the prediction list.

With the COVID topic chosen, type the following sentence into the main WordQ document window: *"If you have COVID you may have associated symptoms such as difficulty breathing, chills and loss of appetite."*

In this example, the words "associated, symptoms, difficulty, breathing, chills, loss, and appetite" are emphasized. Note that COVID-19 is not imported up as a topic word; topic words can only use letters, apostrophes, dash, or space, but not numbers.

At any point, more topic words can be added from multiple sources, and existing topic lists can be edited via the **My Words>Topics** dialog.

Tips

- *How many words should be in a topic?* More is not always better. By and large, when writing about a topic, specialized words make up only a small percentage of what is written. Thus, suggesting too many topical words can be distracting. Quillsoft's own research suggests that having more than a couple hundred topical words leads to decreased usefulness.
- When starting on writing an essay or project on a new subject, students can orient themselves to the topic by collecting relevant vocabulary using WordQ topic tools.