

Web-based Vocabulary Learning with Quizlet

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Title	Quizlet
Developer	Quizlet LLC
Contact Information	http://quizlet.com Quizlet LLC, P.O. Box 77164, San Francisco, CA 94107 info@quizlet.com +1 (510) 495-6550
Type of Product	Web-based flashcard program
Platform	Web-based online platform Available mobile apps for iOS 6.0 or later and Android 2.2 and up
Price	Free to set up a basic account or use existing flashcard sets US\$15 a year for Quizlet Plus subscription with extra features for students US\$25 a year for teacher subscription with additional tools for using Quizlet in the classroom
Help Center	http://quizlet.com/help

Introduction

Using flashcards is a time-honored, effective, and efficient vocabulary learning strategy (Nation, 2001). The advent of information and communication technology (ICT) over the past few decades has enabled EFL learners to maximize vocabulary learning through the use of web-based flashcard programs. The benefits of web-based flashcard programs may even outweigh those of paper-based ones. For instance, not only can web-based flashcard programs help increase students' vocabulary size, they can also track students' learning progress over time, promote motivation by strategically introducing new words, present vocabulary using multimedia, and allow learners to study at any time in any location with an internet connection (Allum, 2004; Altiner, 2011; Hulstijn, 2001; McLean, Hogg, & Rush, 2013; Nakata, 2011).

Because of the benefits of web-based flashcard programs for second or foreign language vocabulary learning, their use has become a popular learning strategy employed by a large number of teachers and students throughout the world (Nakata, 2013). This article will provide an overview of Quizlet, a web-based flashcard program, and address several of its benefits in enabling learners to study second or foreign language vocabulary in a paired-associate format.

An Overview of Quizlet

Quizlet is a website that allows users to make and study flashcard sets using a variety of game-like learning tools. Quizlet is one of the most widely used flashcard websites and has more than one million registered users and eighty million visitors, and is a repository for over thirty million user-generated study sets (Quizlet, 2014). Currently, available study sets are complimentary and accessible to anyone without registering for an account. However, users who want to create their own sets of flashcards must sign up for an account. Students who would like to take advantage of extra features such as image uploading, voice recording, and ad-free functioning can upgrade their account by paying US\$15 a year for a Quizlet Plus subscription. Similarly, it costs US\$25 a year for a teacher subscription with additional tools for using Quizlet in the classroom. Figure 1 illustrates the homepage of Quizlet.



Figure 1. *Quizlet homepage*

As mentioned earlier, users can find and use existing flashcards without signing in by entering a key search term in the search box as shown in Figure 2.

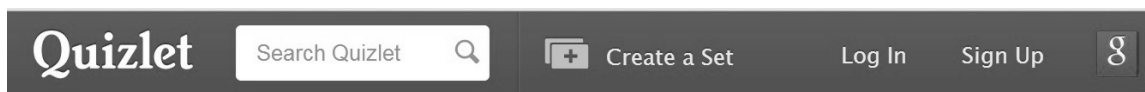


Figure 2. *The search box for finding existing flashcards*

However, since there are not flashcard sets for all conceivable topics or area of interest, users may wish to create study sets by registering for an account which is free of charge and easy. Users can access <http://quizlet.com/help> for detailed instructions on how to create new flashcard sets.

As soon as users have made, or found a set for study, they move on to six different learning modes, namely Flashcards, Learn, Speller, Test, Scatter, and Space Race as illustrated in Figure 3.

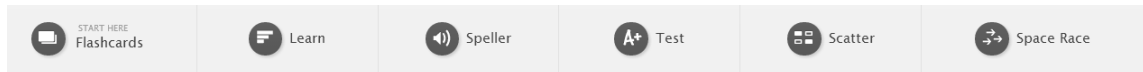


Figure 3. *Different learning modes*

Flashcards: In this mode (shown in Figure 4), users start learning terms and their definitions by clicking to “flip” to see both sides of the card. If audio has been recorded, users can also listen to these terms. The audio function can be switched on and off in the sidebar, and playback can be slowed down by clicking on the Advanced settings link. This learning mode promotes not only learners’ productive, but also their receptive vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2008).



Figure 4. *Flashcard mode*

Learn: This mode (shown in Figure 5) quizzes users on the flashcards they have studied by providing a definition or prompt to which they reply by typing in the corresponding term. It tracks what learners know and what they do not and retests them on their mistakes. This study mode aims to promote productive knowledge of vocabulary and spelling.

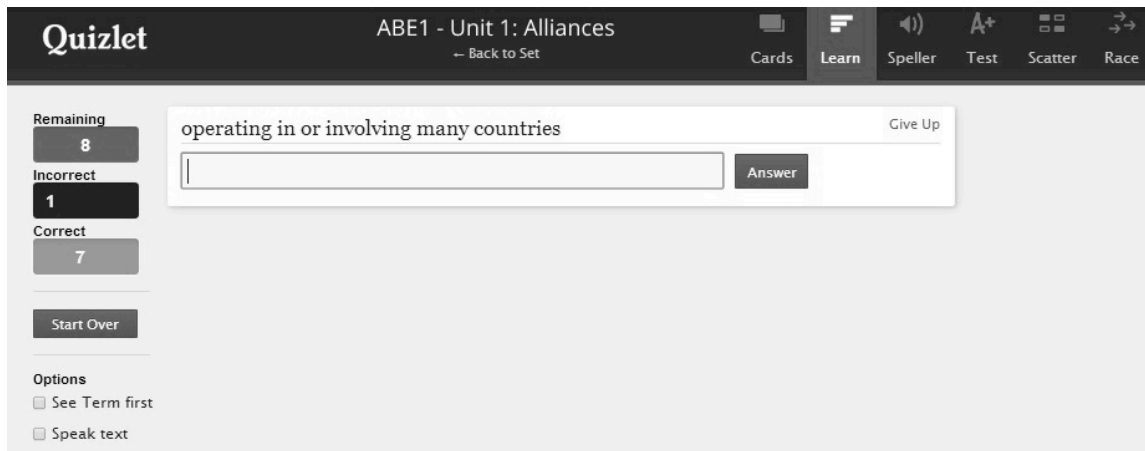


Figure 5. *Learn mode*

Speller: In this mode (shown in Figure 6), users listen to a term or definition and then type in the correct answer. If an incorrect response is entered, the program indicates which letters users have missed so they can try again. This mode is perfect for vocabulary revision, pronunciation, and spelling.

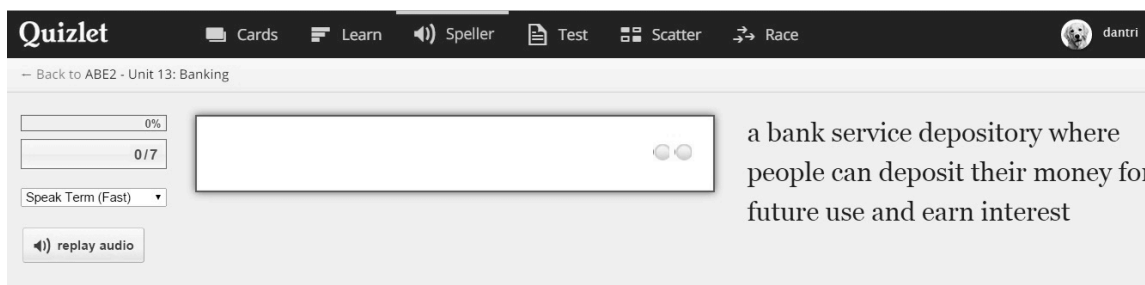


Figure 6. *Speller mode*

Test: This mode automatically generates a random quiz from a flashcard set using four types of questions: writing, matching, multiple choice, and true/false (see Figure 7). Users click “Check Answers” at the bottom of the page to see their scores in the upper right hand corner of the page. This mode is useful as an informal assessment in the classroom.

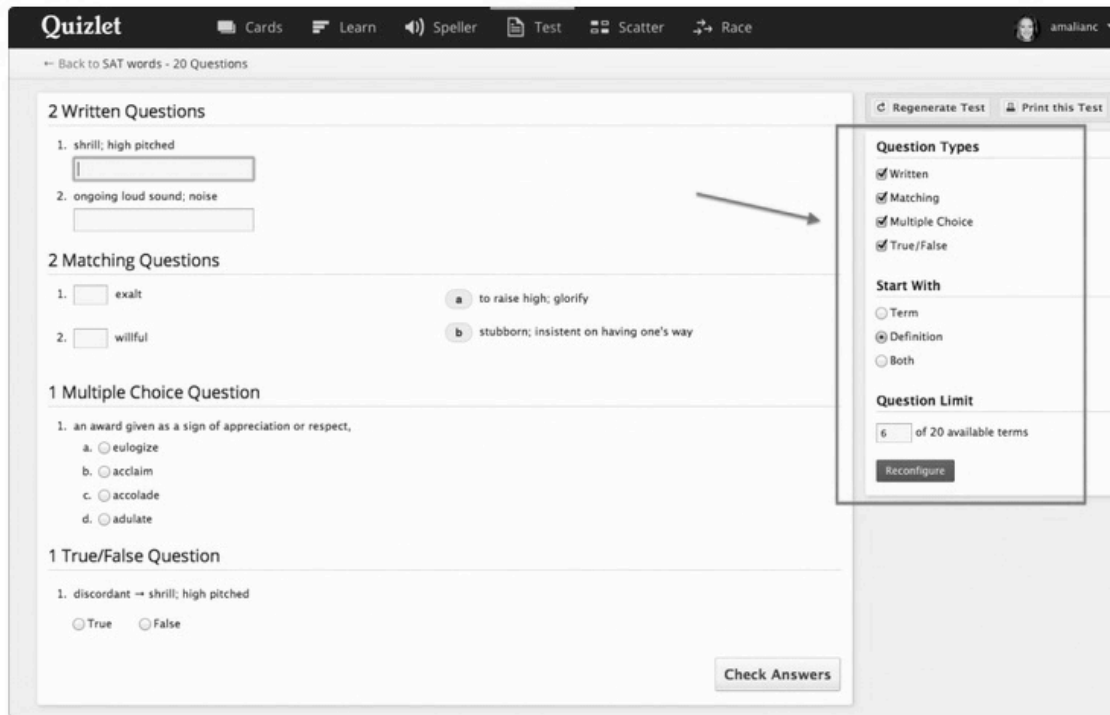


Figure 7. Test mode

Scatter: In this mode (shown in Figure 8), users race against the clock to drag and drop terms and definitions to the correct corresponding location. This is a fun review game which could be done in class with students working individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

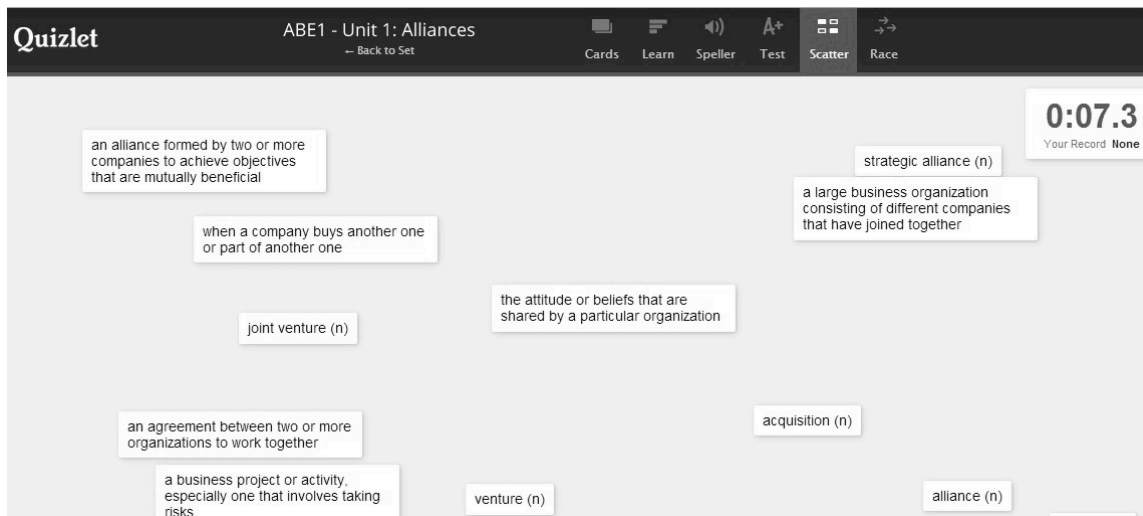


Figure 8. Scatter mode

Space Race: In this mode, users type in the correct term in accordance with the definition scrolling from the left to the right of the screen before it disappears, as can be seen in Figure 9. This mode enables learners to practice recognition/recall and production/spelling as well as typing skills.

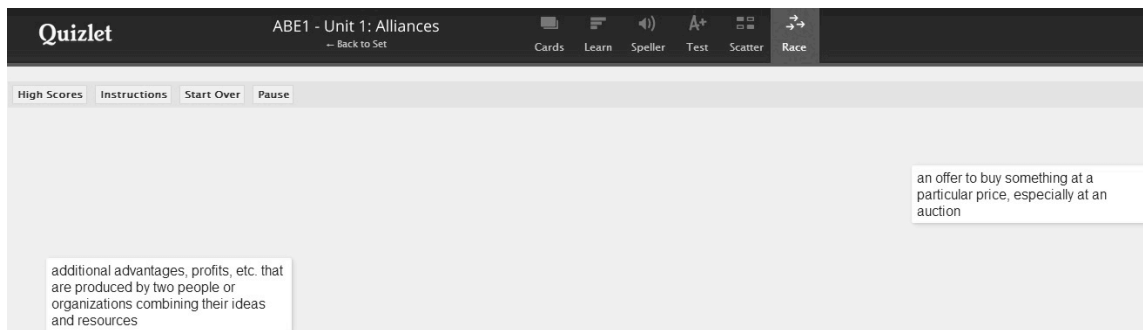


Figure 9. *Space race mode*

Evaluation of Quizlet “quizlet.com”

In order to evaluate web-based flashcard programs, Nakata (2011) put forward a set of criteria which are used below to evaluate Quizlet.

1. **Flashcard creation.** Quizlet provides learners with not only existing or ready-made flashcards but also the ability to create their own flashcards. The former function enables them to study available sets of new words in a time-saving manner, and the latter empowers, or gives them responsibility to create their own flashcard sets.
2. **Multilingual support.** Several research studies reveal that L1 translations foster vocabulary learning (Nakata, 2013) by making vocabulary accessible to low proficiency learners who are not ready for L2 definitions. Quizlet allows users to make target items and their translations in any language.
3. **Multi-word units.** Quizlet lets learners create not only single-word items but multi-word units as well. Such multi-word items can be acquired effectively by using this web-based flashcard program.
4. **Types of information.** In addition to new word meanings, visual and audio information can be added to flashcards for the facilitation of vocabulary learning. Quizlet does have these features. However, in order to make use of image or audio uploading, users have to pay US\$15 per year.
5. **Presentation and retrieval modes.** An ideal web-based flashcard encompasses two modes: presentation practice, which familiarizes learners with target vocabulary, and retrieval practice. Quizlet allows for both of these modes and this should enhance retention of vocabulary.
6. **Retrieval effort.** Retrieval effort refers to the arrangement of vocabulary exercises in order of increasing difficulty. It is hypothesized that successful vocabulary learning will be enhanced if exercises are designed to increase retrieval effort gradually. There is, however, no such function built into Quizlet.
7. **Generative use.** Quizlet is not designed to support generative use such as using target words in different senses, or by using different aspects of word knowledge in a systematic way.

8. **Block size.** Block size is defined as how many flashcards can be studied in one learning session. Nakata (2011) states, “The larger the intervals between study opportunities for a given item, the better the retention will be” (p.13). Adjusting block size is possible in Quizlet, but learners must determine the optimal block size themselves.
9. **Adaptive sequencing.** Quizlet does not meet this criterion, because it does not have a function that allows for adaptive sequencing of future study sessions based on the learner’s previous performance. In adaptive sequencing, lexical items which were previously successfully learned appear less frequently while items which gave the learner difficulty on earlier quizzes appear more frequently.
10. **Expanded rehearsal.** Quizlet does not offer an expanded rehearsal function, or one which creates a review schedule “where the intervals between study trials are gradually increased” over time (Nakata, 2011, p. 21).

Quizlet’s performance related to Nakata’s (2011) criteria are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Criteria for evaluating a web-based flashcard*

Features	Quizlet
Flashcard creation	Yes
Multilingual support	Yes
Multi-word units	Yes
Types of information	Meaning, image, audio
Presentation mode	Yes
Retrieval mode	Yes
Receptive recall	Yes
Receptive recognition	Yes
Productive recall	Yes
Productive recognition	Yes
Retrieval effort	No
Generative use	No
Block size	Can be determined by learners
Adaptive sequencing	No
Expanded rehearsal	No

Conclusion

Quizlet is an effective vocabulary learning tool, allowing users to take control of their own lexical learning. Even though Quizlet does not meet all of the aforementioned criteria of an ideal web-based flashcard program, it is still an extremely useful and easy to use tool for both teachers and students.

References

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