How to Do a Word Study
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Step 1:
Conduct a thorough study of the word itself. Ask the following questions:
What is the <u>basic</u> meaning of the word?
How was the word used in the Old Testament? (Hebrew equivalent)?
How was the word used in intertestamental literature?
How is this word used in the New Testament?

The best sources to use to conduct this part of your study would be TDNT and/or NIDNTT (Colin Brown). NOTE: Be sure to see if these sources have a special section on how this word is used in the specific book you are studying.

Step 2:
Identify <u>every</u> occurrence of the word in the book you are studying (e.g. James). Be sure to find ALL occurrences, <u>including those times where there is a suffix or prefix added to your word</u>. We are <u>not</u> concerned with how other writers (and in most cases, other books) have used the word. This is because writers oftentimes give a word a new or special meaning relevant only to his book (e.g. righteousness in Romans vs. Matthew).

Use Logos Vocabulary Lists, Exegetical Guides and Englishman's Concordance reports to help you identify all occurrences.

Step 3:
Study the way the writer uses this word in the book you are studying. Does he seem to have a particular usage and/or approach to the word? Is there a passage that <u>defines</u> the word?

The best sources to use here would be word study books and/or commentaries that offer special word studies in their introduction. Also, you might check the <u>first</u> occurrence of a word in a good commentary to see if the author is going to do a word study or offer some significant thoughts on the word.

Step 4:
After studying each passage that has your key word, organize the major points or ideas the writer has given. The inspired writer has almost always given us three or more important ideas/concepts/attributes concerning this key word. ***There are few exceptions to this rule!***

This is probably the most important step. DO NOT go on until you have a good, logical outline on how the writer has used and presented this word!!!

Let me describe it this way. Consider the various ways a writer uses a word as a bucket. As you examine each occurrence, does it fit into your first bucket? If so, put that passage there. If not,

create a second "bucket" and put that passage in there. You may find a third or fourth (and sometimes, although rarely, more) buckets.

Illustration:
Faith in the book of Romans

The word occurs 62 times in some form in the book. After examining each of the 62 occurrences, the following "buckets" were discovered:

Bucket #1: The word refers to the Gospel, the body of doctrine (then note all of the passages where the word is used this way; that is, go into this particular bucket).

Bucket #2: Has reference to trust and confidence (then note all of the passages where the word is used in this way).
> Once you do this, can it be sub-divided? Of course it can! Note:
> a) Trust in Paul
> b) Trust in the Gospel
> c) Trust in God
> d) Trust in Christ
>
> Each of these become buckets within the main bucket.

Bucket #3: Has reference to one's personal opinion and viewpoint (then note all of the passages where the word is used in this way).

Step 5:
Write your paper. The paper should have the following proportions:

INTRODUCTION (20%) - which defines the word and discusses the way it is used in <u>all</u> other literature (Old Testament, Jewish, and other New Testament books, etc.).Do not allow yourself to get carried away with this section (it is VERY easy to do). We are not overly concerned about the way others have used this word. We just need a *general idea* on how was used. THAT IS ALL. Most of what we need to know we'll learn by studying the book all by itself. However, sometimes a word had a rich heritage which contributes heavily to the way the writer might use the word (for example; PALINGENESIA in Mathew 19:28). If it didn't have a rich heritage, but was a common, everyday word, then just say so and leave it at that.

BODY (60%) - which includes <u>only</u> the way the author presented the word in his book. This is where you say something like - "Paul has presented three key ideas about faith" or "Paul has focused on three ways FAITH can be understood." <u>The three "buckets" are the three points in the body of your paper!!! By doing the "bucket" approach you automatically created the body of your paper.</u>

Note: In the body of the paper you <u>do not list</u> all of the occurrences of the word (with each "bucket."). This is where you are *studying* the word. *Discuss* the way the inspired writer is using the word, and give a few illustrations from your book; e.g. Romans (usually you don't need to give more than five or six passages – so pick the best ones).

CONCLUSION (20%) - This conclusion would identify the value and usefulness of this study. How are we to apply what we have learned? Have we deepened our understanding of God's message to us in this book? **Don't forget to organize this section as well.** For example, you might say: John's use of the LOGOS is significant for us because first…...second…...third.

Some concluding thoughts:
A good word study can be one of the most enjoyable, fulfilling experiences you will ever have. Take your time and do it right. Develop good word study skills. They will serve you well for the rest of your life. God has buried many wonderful truths that can be discovered only by good word studies.

Most Common Word Study Mistakes

1. Spending too much time on the introduction
2. Failure to find the "buckets," or different ways an inspired writer is using a word
3. Listing *every occurrence* without comment, or doing something like this: "The first time Paul uses the word faith is in Romans 1:5. There he talks about the "obedience of faith." The second time Paul uses the word faith is in Romans 1:8. There he says that he is thankful for their "faith." The third time…." Get the idea? DO NOT do this!!! This is not a word *study*.
4. Failure (in the conclusion) to discuss the value of this study. What lessons can be learned? How can we apply this?