

Vocabulary enrichment: Academic collocations and word families

English for Higher Education Staff Summer School

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What is vocabulary?

- Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to effectively communicate.
- The Lexical Approach (Michael Lewis 1993)

Lexis = vocabulary, fixed phrases, chunks of words that collocate, metaphors, sayings, anything with its own meaning.

Types of vocabulary:

- Listening - words needed to understand what we hear.
- Speaking - words used when speaking.
- Reading - words needed to understand what we read.
- Writing - words used in writing.

How do we learn vocabulary?

- Explicitly (aware)
 - Explicit: note both in and out of context, record using a system, revisit routinely, verbalize for audio memory, regular self-test for recall.

e.g. does it work? Reports of rote learning \neq recall when under pressure talking
 - Implicit: immerse in reading and listening, be confident that exposure in context will give meaning, just sometimes notice and repeat word/phrases.

e.g. is it demotivating? Doesn't it lack rigour and pushes us to zone out?
- Implicitly (exposure, sub-aware)

**What is your
strategy?**

Academic vocabulary

- **Why is vocabulary important? In what ways can building and increasing your vocabulary improve your academic writing?**

Increasing your vocabulary can benefit your academic studies in a number of ways. It can help you:

- get through the reading you have to do much more quickly.
 - express yourself more effectively in both written and spoken English.
 - give you confidence that you are actively engaging with your subject.
 - connect you to the community surrounding your subject area.
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- ** Interesting statistic:* Most native-speakers of English come into university with a vocabulary of about 20,000 words. Without thinking about it we usually pick up about a thousand new words a year.

Academic vocabulary

The academic vocabulary necessary for writing a science laboratory report (e.g. apparatus, procedure, errors) has some differences from the academic vocabulary which might be used in social science research (e.g. survey, population, sample), though of course they would also have much in common.

In general, academic vocabulary can be considered to consist of three types of vocabulary:

- **General words** which are acceptable for academic use
- Non-general **'academic'** words
- **Technical words** specific to individual subject area

General words which are academic

Consider these examples, all of which contain only words from the GSL, but all of which are acceptable in academic speech or writing:

The aim of this report is to... [see language for reports]

What I want to talk about today is... [see language for presentations]

There are several possible reasons for this, for example... [giving reasons, giving examples]

In comparison, the control group... [comparing]

General words which are academic

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The aim of this report is to... [see language for reports]

What I want to talk about today is... [see language for presentations]

There are several possible reasons for this, for example... [giving reasons, giving examples]

In comparison, the control group... [comparing]

- The important consideration is *tone*: words and phrases such as *aim*, *report*, *reasons*, *for example*, and *in comparison* are all academic in tone, while *like*, *thing*, and *bad* are not. For this reason, when studying words for academic use, it is important to know whether they are academic (formal) or not.

General words which are academic

General vocabulary can also include general words which have special meaning in academic contexts. Examples include:

Discipline

general meaning: training people to obey rules

academic meaning: a subject of study

Population

general meaning: the number of people living in a country region

academic meaning: all individuals who could possibly be included in a study/survey

Control

general meaning: power over sb/sth

academic meaning: a group used in a scientific experiment to check results

Which Academic Vocabulary?

You can search for subsets of Academic Word Lists depending on your academic area, for example;

Education

Business

Science & technology

Politics

Law

Music

Mathematics

Environmental Science

Vocabulary Building Skills

Use of prefixes, suffixes, and roots to produce words (

Knowledge of construction of compound nouns and adjectives

Ability to change word forms (nouns to verbs etc)

Information about word families (synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, etc)

Vocabulary Building Skills

Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Vocabulary Building Skills

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____ comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____ matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _____ glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _____ aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____ standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____ natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _____ locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____ act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____ cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____ combatant is another word for civilian.

Vocabulary Building Skills-

Answers

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach ___**dis**___ comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his ___**mis**___ matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt ___**un**___ glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those ___**anti-**___ aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's ___**sub**___ standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a ___**super**___ natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to ___**re**___ locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to ___**inter**___ act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the ___**pre**___ cautions about watching my step.
10. A ___**non**___ combatant is another word for civilian.

Academic Collocations:

- **Academic collocation** is a word or phrase that is often used with another word or phrase, in a way that sounds correct to people who have spoken the language all their lives, but might not be expected from the meaning
- Academic → achievement, career, discipline, journal, skills, writing
- Critical → essay, factor, theory, perspective
- Essential → element, component, feature, function

Collocation Exercise

- Pick 5 academic collocations from the list.
- Write a short paragraph explaining your field by using target collocations you selected.
- Exchange your work with your partner. Read your partner work and provide feedback on the vocabulary usage.

Word Families

actor, actress, activist

active

to **act**

actual

interact, react

action, activity

Caught in the **act**.

Word Families- Exercies

Put the correct form of the word in brackets into the blank.

1. In the future the public will have a wider _____ of television programs. (**CHOOSE**)
2. Looking after the health of 700 children is heavy _____. (**RESPONSIBLE**)
3. The town spent more money on _____ and health than ever before (**HOUSE**)
4. Do you have any particular _____ where we sit? (**PREFER**)
5. There's a _____ contrast between what he does and what he says. (**STRIKE**)
6. The party turned out to be a huge _____ (**DISAPPOINT**)
7. He was fined and _____ for reckless driving (**QUALIFY**).
8. Is it possible to remove the smell from the books that have been in _____ for such a long time? (**STORE**)
9. Many people are interested in job _____ more than in earning large amount of money (**SATISFY**).
10. I hadn't made a _____ , so I just got on the first flight available. (**RESERVE**)

Word Families- Exercies

Put the correct form of the word in brackets into the blank.

1. In the future the public will have a wider **choice** of television programs. (CHOOSE)
2. Looking after the health of 700 children is heavy **responsibility**. (RESPONSIBLE)
3. The town spent more money on **housing** and health than ever before (HOUSE)
4. Do you have any particular **preference** where we sit? (PREFER)
5. There's a **striking** contrast between what he does and what he says. (STRIKE)
6. The party turned out to be a huge **disappointment** (DISAPPOINT)
7. He was fined and **disqualified** for reckless driving (QUALIFY).
8. Is it possible to remove the smell from the books that have been in **storage** for such a long time? (STORE)
9. Many people are interested in job **satisfaction** more than in earning large amount of money (SATISFY).
10. I hadn't made a **reservation**, so I just got on the first flight available. (RESERVE)

Tips for Vocabulary in Academic Writing and Speaking

- Beware of general dictionaries for discipline-specific terms!
- Write to express, not to impress!
- Avoid repetitive words!
- Check the content and vocab relation!

Match the letter of the most appropriate definition with the following words from the Academic Word List

1. *predominant*: a. the most common b. the earliest variety c. the weakest

2. *phenomenon*: a. a spectacular event b. something which occurs at a precise time
c. something that is observed to happen or exist

3. *whereas*: a. in contrast b. similarly c. in another place

4. *dynamic*: a. fuel-powered b. rigid, fixed to a spot c. constantly changing and progressing

5. *paradigm*: a. a rectangular shape b. a model which explains an event
c. contrasting theories of the same event

6. hierarchical: a. multi-layered b. passing information from generation to generation
c. a system of ranking by importance
7. arbitrary: a. judged by merit b. without principles or plans
c. following pre-determined procedures
8. parameter: a. defined limit b. variability c. a system of measurement
9. commodity: a. weakness b. something sold for money
c. a feature shared by two or more people
10. infrastructure: a. animal skeleton b. public transport system c. the basic facilities of an organisation, or a society

Formal vs Informal Vocabulary: How could the below sentences be changed to make them more formal? Which words or phrases could be more formal?

1. It was decided to start the first experiment at the earliest possible time point.

1. It was decided to *commence* the *preliminary* experiment at the earliest possible time point.

2. The results of the research study clearly showed that sleep deprivation is a big problem.

2. The results of the research study clearly *demonstrated* that sleep deprivation is a *widespread* problem.

3. We got quite a lot of subjects from the local town or village where they live.

3. We *recruited a large number* of subjects from the local town or village where they *reside*.

4. It is clear that the continued widespread use of fossil fuels links to the many problems associated with climate change.

4. It is clear that the continued widespread *consumption* of fossil fuels *corresponds* with the many problems associated with climate change.

5. The results of the experiment, when compared to those conducted before, are considered to be worse.

5. The results of the experiment, when compared to those conducted *previously*, are considered to be *inferior*.

6. The use of social distancing in the UK has occurred on and off through 2020 due to the pandemic.

6. The *practice / policy* of social distancing in the UK has occurred *intermittently* through 2020 due to the pandemic.

7. The aim of the law is to keep maximum control of the situation at all times.

7. The aim of the law is to *retain* maximum control of the situation *permanently*.

Helpful Phrases for Academic Vocabulary

Casual	Formal	Example Sentence
get		
need		
talk about		
Get in touch		
make sure		
To tell you/them		
Talk more about		
fix the problem		
extra help		
tell you		

Helpful Phrases for Academic Vocabulary

Casual	Formal	Example Sentence
get	receive	I received your completed paperwork.
need	require	I require more resources to complete my presentation.
talk about	discuss	I would like to discuss the hourly wage for this position.
Get in touch	contact	I contacted the IT department about my computer problems.
make sure	ensure	I want to ensure I have completed my application correctly.
To tell you/them	inform	I will inform my supervisor that we are ready to move forward in the production process.
Talk more about	elaborate	I would like to elaborate on the ideas presented in the meeting this morning.
fix the problem	resolve the issue	I have a meeting with the marketing department tomorrow to resolve the issue.
extra help	Further/additional assistance	We will require additional assistance to complete our marketing campaign.
tell you	notify	I wanted to notify you that I have an opening in my schedule tomorrow at 3.00 ppm

Exercises

For each sentence below, find a more professional way to replace the underlined words. There may be several correct answers.

1. I have attached the document below. Give me a heads up if there are any issues.
2. I got your email about the agenda for our next meeting.
3. The Finance Department told me about my filing mistake.
4. My coworker needs extra help with their presentation.

Exercises

For each sentence below, find a more professional way to replace the underlined words. There may be several correct answers.

1. I have attached the document below. Please notify me if there are any issues.
2. I received your email about the agenda for our next meeting.
3. The Finance Department contacted/notified me about my filing mistake.
4. My coworker requires additional assistance with their presentation.

Exercises

For each sentence below, find a more professional way to replace the underlined words. There may be several correct answers.

5. I like the suggestions you gave me on my marketing ideas.

6. I am not free at that time. Can we reschedule?

7. I want to tell you that my schedule changed, and I can no longer attend the meeting.

8. I am searching a job at Google.

Exercises

For each sentence below, find a more professional way to replace the underlined words. There may be several correct answers.

5. I appreciate the suggestions you gave me on my marketing ideas.

6. I am unavailable at that time. Can we reschedule?

7. I would like to inform you that my schedule changed, and I can no longer attend the meeting.

8. I am seeking a position at Google.

Useful Websites for Vocabulary

- <https://www.eapfoundation.com>
- <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk>
- <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/academic-skills-kit/writing/academic-writing/reporting-verbs/>
- <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/transitions/>

Game Time! 😊