



EL Support

KINDERGARTEN

ACADEMIC
VOCABULARY

What is Academic Vocabulary?

Academic Vocabulary includes the words, phrases, and language structures that are used in learning. It includes the formal language that is used in education, whether orally, in textbooks, and in assessments.

Academic Vocabulary is distinct from the informal language that is used at home, on the playground, and in daily conversation. Slang and colloquialisms are not part of academic vocabulary. Students may be quite adept with the English language in the informal register long before the academic register is developed. It takes specific instruction to build academic vocabulary.

Teaching Academic Vocabulary

There are three methods of teaching academic vocabulary, and all three are necessary for vocabulary development. **Explicit instruction of words, explicit instruction of word-learning strategies, and indirect instruction of vocabulary** are all essential to developing academic vocabulary.

In explicit instruction of words, teachers select terms that are taught using definitions, examples, and proper usage. These terms may be content-specific (e.g., addend, subtrahend) or conceptual (e.g., summarize, explain). This instruction includes using the terms in context and multiple exposures to cement the learning. If word banks or vocabulary notebooks are used, these are the terms that are included with definitions, usage, and non-linguistic representations to help the learner remember the term and its meaning and usage.

In explicit instruction of word-learning strategies, teachers introduce, model, and prompt for the use of strategies that are used when a student comes to an unknown word. Context clues, word parts, cognates, text features, and related words are used to help the student attach meaning to the unknown word. Students must practice using the strategies across the curriculum whenever they are presented with unknown words. For the English Learner, special attention must be given to helping him determine which are the important words. Names and poetic or flowery description can be difficult to navigate, but may not be essential for comprehension of the big ideas being presented.

In indirect instruction of vocabulary, students are exposed to language through discussion, reading, being read to, multimedia resources, and education-related experiences. This is a very natural way to learn language, but it also varies widely depending on the language experience of the student.

Reinforcing Academic Vocabulary Instruction

Students should record terms that are taught directly. The record of the terms should be in a format that the student can easily access and understand. The vocabulary may be collected in a notebook, on note cards, in word banks, or other collections, but they must have meaning for the student. If each student has an individual record of the terms, leave room for new information. Students should add new concepts, deeper meaning, graphics, or new usages to the record as the vocabulary develops.

When a term is revisited or a new or deeper meaning is explored, the students should be prompted to record the new learning. Students may also use graphic organizers to help them see the connections between related terms. This is especially helpful when studying a topic with many academic vocabulary terms. **The Standards Plus EL Portal has many graphic organizers that can be used.** Each graphic organizer is presented in a blank format and a completed format as an example of how it may be used:

- Concept web
- Concept tree
- Venn diagram
- Organized List
- Idea hand

Games are an engaging way to revisit vocabulary, and a few simple games can be used all year with different sets of vocabulary. Vocabulary Bingo can be set up so that the students listen for vocabulary terms or their definitions. The bingo cards may have a different term written in each square, or they may have a different definition in each square. The teacher can call the definition of the term, and the students must mark the matching term, or the teacher may call the term itself, and the students must mark the definition that goes with the term. **Examples of these two types of bingo games are found in the Standards Plus EL Portal .** Charades or picture charades work well for terms that can be acted out or drawn. Crossword puzzles and rebuses are great for review, too.

Reinforcing Academic Vocabulary Instruction

In the spirit of competition, students can compete for class, table, or personal “points” for finding or using academic vocabulary. For example, a student may come in from the playground and say, “Wow! A lot happened at lunch today. Let me **summarize** what happened...” If summarize is a term that the class is studying, the class, that student’s table group, or the student could earn a “point” for correct usage of an academic vocabulary term. Students may also earn points for finding academic vocabulary terms in reading material, hearing academic vocabulary terms that others use, or using them in their writing.

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Language Arts - Academic Vocabulary

A

Adjective: A word used to describe a noun.

Affix: A word part added to a base or root word that changes the meaning of the base or root word.

Antonym: A word that has the opposite meaning of another word.

Ask a question: To use a sentence to get information.

B

Base or Root Word: A word that has meaning on its own and can have an affix added to the beginning or end.

Blending: Saying individual sounds fluidly to make words.

C

Capitalize: To begin a word with a capital letter.

Category: An overriding concept that is used to group things or ideas (colors, shapes).

Character: The people or animals that complete the action in a story.

Common noun: A general name of a person, place, thing, or idea (girl, school, toe, happiness).

Compare: Telling how things are alike.

Complete sentence: A complete thought with a subject and a verb.

Connections: Authors connect or put ideas together in a text by showing how they are alike or different, how they are arranged in order, or how steps are used to show order.

Consonants: all of the other letters in the alphabet.

Context: The words and ideas around an unfamiliar word in text.

Contrast: Telling how things are different.

Conversation: Talking back and forth between two or more people.

Courteous: To be kind and thoughtful. Being nice.

Kindergarten

Language Arts - Academic Vocabulary

D

Deletion: To remove or leave out (craft – delete c – raft).

Describe: To tell about someone or something including details such as looks, color, size, shape, ideas, likes, or dislikes.

E

Ending Punctuation: The punctuation mark found at the end of a sentence; period, question mark, exclamation point.

Events: The things that happen to the characters in a story.

Exclamation point: The punctuation mark found at the end of an exclamatory sentence (!).

Explain: To provide details and reasons that something happened.

F

Fact: True information.

Favorite: The one you like the best.

Final sound: The last sound.

First word: The word that comes first in a sentence.

H

High frequency words: Sight words; words that compose most of the words students read. Often these words have irregular spelling patterns.

I

Illustration: A picture or graphic used to help the reader better understand the text.

Illustrations: Pictures and graphics that help show what happens in a story.

Inflection: An ending that indicates verb tense (-ing, -ed) or number (-s, -es).

Inform: To tell someone facts about a topic.

Informational Text: Text that teaches about a topic.

Initial sound: The first sound.

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Language Arts - Academic Vocabulary

Interrogatives: Question words.

Isolate: To separate from the rest.

K

Key Details: Information provided that answers who, what, why, where, when, and how questions; information in the text that supports the main topic.

L

Letter: The symbols that represent sounds in words. There are 26 letters in the alphabet.

Literature: Text written to entertain the reader or tell a story.

Long vowel sound: The sound a vowel makes when it says its own name; /ā/, /ē/, /ī/, /ō/, /ū/.

Lowercase Letters: The non-capitalized forms of each letter in the alphabet.

M

Main topic: Who or what the whole passage is about.

Medial sound: The middle sound.

Multiple Meaning: Having more than one meaning.

N

Noun: A person, place, thing, or idea (Sam, boy, park, flowers).

O

Onset: The first sound in a word or syllable (cat - /k/ onset; /at/ rime).

Opinion: How you feel about a topic.

P

Period: The punctuation mark found at the end of a declarative sentence or statement (.).

Plural Noun: Two or more persons, places, things, or ideas.

Possessive noun: A noun that shows belonging (Gary's coat).

Prefix: An affix added to the beginning of a word.

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Language Arts - Academic Vocabulary

Preposition: A word used to indicate time, place, or direction (on, in, under, beside, during).

Pronoun: A word that takes the place of a noun. When naming oneself, use the pronoun I.

Proper noun: A specific name of a person, place, thing, or idea (Sam, Mt. Rushmore).

Q

Question mark: The punctuation mark found at the end of an interrogative sentence (?).

Quiet voice: Speaking in a voice that is loud enough for a partner to hear, but not so loud as to disturb others.

R

Reasons: Statements given to explain or show the cause of something.

Retell: To explain what happened or what was read in one's own words.

Rhyme: Words with the same ending vowel and consonant combination (e.g., ball-fall-call).

Rime: The remaining part of the word or syllable without the onset (cat - /k/ onset; /at/ rime).

S

Segmenting: Breaking words into their individual sounds.

Sentence: A group of words that includes a subject and verb and contains a complete thought.

Setting: Where and when a story takes place.

Shades of meaning: Describes the slight differences between the meanings of words.

Short vowel sound: A soft vowel sound; /ă/, /ĕ/, /ĭ/, /ŏ/, /ŭ/.

Singular Noun: One person, place, thing, or idea.

Sort: To separate into groups that have matching characteristics.

Spell: Putting letters in order of the sounds they make in words.

Substitution: To replace a letter (cat – substitute o for a – cot).

Suffix: An affix added to the end of a word.

Syllable: A part of a word that contains one vowel sound.

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Language Arts - Academic Vocabulary

T
Tell an answer: To use a sentence that gives information back to someone who asks a question.

U
Uppercase Letters: The capitalized forms of each letter in the alphabet.

V
Verb: A word that tells the action or state of the noun; action words (run, jump, leap, sleep).
Vowels: a, e, i, o, u and sometimes y.

Kindergarten

Mathematics - Academic Vocabulary

A

Addition: To join sets together.

Additional: More than the beginning amount. Numbers or objects that are added to the starting amount.

Angle: The area formed when two sides meet; the space between two intersecting lines.

Array: Objects arranged in rows and columns.

Attribute: A characteristic of a figure; size, shape, number, etc.

C

Category: A defined group.

Circle: A perfectly round, continuous curved shape that is closed.

Classify: To group by similar attributes.

Compare: To look at how two groups are alike or different.

Compose: To put numbers or sets of objects together to make larger numbers or sets.

Cone: A solid figure with a circular base that rises to a single point.

Count: Name numbers one by one to determine a total.

Count on: To begin at the first addend and count the number of the second addend to arrive at the solution to an addition number sentence (e.g., $6 + 3 = 6, 7, 8, 9$, so $6 + 3 = 9$).

Counters: Objects used to represent numbers and sets.

Cube: A solid figure with six equal square faces.

Cylinder: A solid figure with two circular bases connected by a solid, curved section.

D

Decompose: To break apart numbers into sets.

E

Environment: The surroundings, the world, the place in which one lives.

Equal: A comparison in which two sets have the same number or are the same size.

Equal sign: The sign used to indicate a solution ($=$).

Equation: A number sentence with an equal sign.

Kindergarten

Mathematics - Academic Vocabulary

F

Fewer than (less than): A comparison in which one number or set is smaller or has fewer than another.

Five frame: A grid with five spaces that is used to count objects up to five, with each space representing one.

G

Greater than: A comparison in which one number or set is larger or has more than another.

H

Heavier: Having more weight.

Heavy: A weight that is large.

Height: The distance from the bottom to the top of an object; the distance the top of an object is from its base.

Hexagon: A six-sided polygon.

Hundred chart: A chart with the numbers listed in order from 1-100.

L

Last number name: The last number said in counting; represents the total.

Length: The distance from one end to the other end of an object.

Less: Having a smaller or lesser value or size.

Light: A weight that is small.

Lighter: Having less weight.

Long: A length that is large.

Longer: Having more length.

Kindergarten

Mathematics - Academic Vocabulary

M

Measureable Attributes: The features that define how an object is different or unique. The features that help define a specific shape or group.

Minus sign: The sign used to indicate subtraction (-).

More: Having a larger or greater value or size.

N

Nest: To determine numbers of objects that can be found in larger sets (3 is a smaller set that fits in a set of five).

Number name: The word for each of the numbers (e.g., one, two, three).

O

Ones: Single numbers or objects: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9.

P

Part-part-whole: A display that shows the two parts of a set and the resulting whole.

Plus sign: The sign used to indicate addition (+).

Polygon: A closed shape with straight sides.

Position: Where an object is located: above, beside, below, next to, under, in front of, behind, etc.

Pyramid: A solid figure with triangular-shaped faces and a triangular or square base.

R

Rectangle: A four-sided polygon with four right angles and opposite sides equal.

Rhombus: A four-sided polygon with four equal sides.

S

Scattered arrangement: Objects placed randomly with a pattern.

Sequence: The order in which a group is organized.

Set: A group of objects or numbers.

Short: A length or height that is small.

Kindergarten

Mathematics - Academic Vocabulary

Shorter: Having less length or height.

Side: The edge of a polygon; a straight line.

Solve: To find the result or answer.

Sort: To separate by classification.

Sphere: A solid circular figure.

Square: A four-sided polygon with four right angles and four equal sides.

Subtraction: To separate a set.

T

Take away: Remove a quantity from another number; to find the difference.

Tall: A height that is large.

Taller: Having more height.

Ten frame: A grid with ten spaces that is used to count objects up to ten, with each space representing one.

Three-dimensional: A solid shape.

Total/Total amount: The quantity of objects in a set; the solution to an addition number sentence.

Trapezoid: A four-sided polygon with one set of parallel lines.

Triangle: A three-sided polygon.

Two-dimensional: A flat shape.

V

Vertex: The point at which two sides meet.

W

Weight: The heaviness of an object.

Whole: All of the numbers or objects in a set.