



ACADEMIC ENGLISH VOCABULARY

Academic Vocabulary – AWL (Academic Word List)

Many words in academic English are the same as everyday vocabulary, but they are often used with a slightly different meaning, which may be specialised.

Everyday	Meaning	Academic use	Meaning
Standards of discipline in schools have declined	The ability to control yourself or other people, even in difficult situations	Nanotechnology is a relatively new discipline.	A particular area of stud y, especially a subject s tudied at a college or university
Underline all the verbs from the text	To mark with a line or lines underneath; underscore	The chart underlines the importance of consuming more fruits and vegetables	Gives emphasis to
The lake was frozen solid	not liquid or gas	This provided solid evidence that he committed the crime.	certain or safe; of a good standard; giving confidence or support

Exercise 1

The words in the box each have an everyday and academic use. Complete each pair of sentences using the same word in the correct form.

generate turn solid confirm identify underline character pose natural focus

1.	They love to for photographs in front of their garden. The president's comments a threat to stability in the region.		
2.	I'm such a terrible photographer, most of my photos are blurred and out of		
	Children malnutrition should be theof our attention in the coming years.		
3.	I went to trivago.com and my hotel reservation. The data the hypothesis that pet owners enjoy better health.		
4.	The power plant in Chingaza electricity for the whole region.		





	Using movies in the class always a great deal of debate among teachers.
5.	The murderer wasfrom fingerprints discovered at the scene In this theory of history, progress is closely with technology.
6.	Studentsthe most important ideas when they are reading university texts.
	The study the fact that very little research exists.
7.	He lived in close communion with
	Motor-racing is by a dangerous sport.
8.	The liquid becameas the temperature was lowered.
	The study lacks evidence and its conclusions are questionable.

Vocabulary and academic style

In writing, academics use many expressions which are neutral, but they also use rather formal expressions which are not common in everyday language. Knowing whether an expression is formal or just neutral is important because it gives you a better language rapport to interact in both daily life and academic contexts.

Neutral	More formal	Neutral	More formal
in short, briefly	in sum, to sum up,	try	Attempt
basically	fundamentally	mainly/mostly	primarly
only	solely	typical of	characteristic of
almost, more or	virtually		
less			

However, very informal vocabulary may be used in **spoken** academic styles in classes and lectures. Learn to understand informal language when you hear it but be careful not to use it in essays and written assignments.

Here are some examples of teachers using informal language.

'OK. Have a shot at doing task number 8.' (more formal: Try/Attempt to do ...)

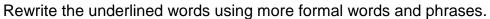
'There's no way schools can be held responsible for failures of government policy.' (more formal: Schools cannot in any way be held ...)





Academic language tries to be clear and precise, so it is important to keep a vocabulary notebook and learn the differences between similar words, as well as typical word combinations.

Exercise 2



1	The book is mainly concerned with the problem of policing the internet.			
2	Almost every school in the country had reported problems with the new system.			
3	The work of the Institute is not only devoted to cancer research.			
4	Basically, we believe we have demonstrated a significant link between the two events.			
5	Several research teams have had a shot at solving the problem, without success.			
6	The reaction is typical of the way large corporations keep control of their markets.			
7	We tried to find a new way of understanding the data.			
8	Briefly, with the loss of centrality, historical centres are transformed into historical places or neighbourhoods.			

*Adapted from Academic Vocabulary in Use, Michael McCarthy, Felicity O'Dell, 2016.





ANSWER KEY

Exercise 1

- 1. Pose/pose
- 2. Focus/focus
- 3. Confirmed/confirmed
- 4. Generates/generates
- 5. Identified/identified
- 6. Underline/underlines
- 7. Nature/nature
- 8. Solid/solid

Exercise 2

- 1. Mainly/ primarly
- 2. Almost/virtually
- 3. Not only/solely
- 4. Basically/fundamentally
- 5. Had a shot/attempt to do
- 6. Typical of/characteristic of
- 7. Tried/attempted
- 8. Briefly / To sum up