

Academic Vocabulary

Researchers such as Kinsela, 2003; Becks, 2002; Marzano, 2005; and Scarcella 2003, stress that vocabulary knowledge is strongly correlated to academic achievement. Academic language or vocabulary is essential to reading comprehension, learning, and applying concepts. This type of vocabulary used during instruction is known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). It differs from the language used in daily social interactions, known as Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS). The WIDA Consortium categorizes academic vocabulary from content areas into three categories – *General*, *Specific* and *Technical* language. ESOL teachers can use *WIDA’s Performance Definitions* to guide their planning for systematic and explicit vocabulary instruction. As the students progress towards attaining English language proficiency, their use of more complex vocabulary must also increase.

Engaging English language learners with vocabulary across the curriculum in multiple contexts and language domains helps them build word consciousness (metalinguistic skills) as well as gain a deeper understanding of concepts. Closing the vocabulary gap for ELLs will level the playing field by providing them a strong foundation for the knowledge and skills needed in the 21st century.

The list on the following page delineates the type of vocabulary needed to access each content area during the marking period. Specific Language Vocabulary words are listed by content because they are important to learning the vocabulary in context during the marking period, however, they may also be used in other content areas.

<p style="text-align: center;">General Language Vocabulary <i>Words required for basic communication. They are often learned through context.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Specific Language Vocabulary <i>They are academic words that appear in high frequency across content areas and need to be taught explicitly. (Listed in orange.)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Technical Language Vocabulary <i>Words limited to a specific content, low frequency, and best taught in a relevant context. (Listed in black.)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) • Highest frequency vocabulary • General content vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appear frequently across content areas (e.g., describe, synthesize, analyze, pattern, solution) • Multiple-meaning words used in a variety of contexts and contents • Provides an efficient way to express a known concept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low frequency words or phrases • Limited to a specific content • Best taught in context as needed

Click on link for professional development:

- **What is Academic Language? Webcast**
<http://www.colorincolorado.org/webcasts/academiclanguage/>
- **Articles on academic vocabulary building**
http://www.scoe.org/docs/ah/AH_kinsella2.pdf
<http://innovativocab.wikispaces.com/file/view/MarzVocabiGami.pdf>
http://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/literacy/files/Vocabulary/choosingwords/Which_Words_to_Teach.pdf
- **Models and strategies for Vocabulary Awareness and Mastery** - This model for vocabulary instruction promotes vocabulary building and comprehension (see Slides 19 and 20 when visiting link below)
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/development/resources/ELLs/player.html>
<http://www.elltoolbox.com/vocabulary-activities.html>
- **The Language of Mathematics: Indirect Comparison - Which line is longer?**
https://mymcps-instruction.mcpsmd.org/sites/ic/_layouts/mcps.olc.home/resourceview.aspx?ResourceID=2690&ViewPage=1
- **Academic Language Function Toolkit**
<http://orh.sweetwaterschools.org/files/2012/06/Academic-Language-Functions-toolkit.pdf>

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General Language Vocabulary

Select words based on students' needs to communicate in the classroom and school and to complete specific tasks.

describe, explain, observe, match, share, predict, compare, same/similarities, different/differences, sort, organize, category, label, discuss, question, ask, answer, graphic organizer, notes, storyboard, revise, edit (e.g., capital letter, punctuation), draw, sketch

Thinking and Academic Success Skills Vocabulary – Synthesis and Effort/Motivation/Persistence

put together, organize, make categories, make connections, draw conclusion, strategies, goal, diligent, problem solve, plan, practice

Specific Language Vocabulary and Technical Language Vocabulary by Content

Art	observe/observation, memory, imagination , artwork (e.g., form, purpose, function, steps/procedures), colors, lines, shapes (e.g., 3–D, organic, geometric), textures (e.g., texture types, it feels ___), patterns (e.g., repetition, environmental)
Health Education	list, recognize, explain, differentiate, describe, define, demonstrate, affect, identify , humans, member, family members, special trait, family structure, customs, height, weight, growth, five senses, food choices, select, physical fitness, healthy, strong, bone, muscle, teeth, prevent, illness, ChooseMyPlate, serving, fruit, vegetable
Information Literacy	inquiry research (e.g., driving question, detailed question, keywords, key details, facts, main topic/main idea, conclusion, personal connection), resource (e.g., print/digital book, print/online encyclopedia, multimedia source, online database, website), text features (e.g., table of contents, index, photograph, illustration, caption, navigational features, menu), citation (e.g., title, author, illustrator, publisher, organization, website)
Math	length (e.g., measure, measurement, how long/high/deep/wide/short), comparing length (e.g., shorter, shortest, longer, longest, about the same, taller, tallest, greater than, less than, equal to, how many more/less), addition/subtraction (e.g., equation, addend, sum, difference, equal, equal sign, known/unknown, how many more/fewer, how many total), place value (e.g., tens, ones)
Music	instrument , rhythm (e.g., rhythm pattern, long/short sounds, silence), melody (e.g., melodic pattern, pitch, pitch pattern), notating music (e.g., notation, staff, quarter note, eighth note), improvisation, improvise
Physical Education	arms, legs, feet, knees, shoulders, hands , jump (e.g., takeoff, flight, landing, rhythmic jumping, double-bounce, single-bounce, height, distance), balance (e.g., static/dynamic balance, base of support, balance point, wide, narrow, curled, twisted, symmetrical balance, asymmetrical/nonsymmetrical balance), weight transfer (e.g., controlled movement, rock, roll, rotation, tucked)
Reading	informational text (e.g., cover, title, facts, key details, information, main topic/main idea, central message) text features (e.g., photograph, illustration, table of contents, caption, glossary, boldface print, chapter heading), narrative text (e.g., characters, setting, events, point of view), context clues (e.g., look “inside/outside the word”), base word, prefix (e.g., <i>un-</i>), sensory word
Science and Engineering	materials (e.g., paper, plastic, glass, metal, wood, cloth), observable properties (e.g., color, shape, size, texture, hardness, flexibility) , environment (e.g., sunlight, water, air, land, temperature, waste, litter, pollution, recycle), soil sample (e.g., sand, rock, clay, mulch), natural object/structure (e.g., mountain, hill, river, pond, etc.), human-made object/structure (e.g., building, playground, monument, etc.), changes to Earth’s surface (e.g., weathering, erosion)
Social Studies	action project, commercial , geography (e.g., Earth, continent, North America, United States, Maryland, community), map (e.g., title, direction, north, south, east, west, map key/legend, symbol), physical characteristics (e.g., physical features, landform, body of water, weather, climate, soil, vegetation, animal life), human characteristics (e.g., human-made features, jobs), land proposal (e.g., land, develop, benefit, harm), environment (e.g., protect, air, water, land, trash/garbage, pollution, endangered species, landfill, reduce, reuse, recycle)
Writing	audience , informational writing (e.g., topic, topic sentence, facts, reasons, conclusion - question/exclamation/ personal connection), text features (e.g., illustration, photograph, title, caption, table of contents), poetry writing (e.g., poem, sensory word, visualize, image, mind picture, feeling word), preposition, article (e.g., <i>a, the, an</i>), noun, verb, pronoun, adjective, conjunction

Note: Use this document to select the requisite academic vocabulary necessary to make the content of the curriculum comprehensible for ESOL students. Words are listed in the order they are addressed during the marking period and grouped according to the context in which they are taught. Specific Language Vocabulary used across contents is listed in **Orange** and Technical Language Vocabulary is listed in **Black**.

Resource: [Social Studies Grades K–3 Content Vocabulary](#)

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