

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>

[MENU](#)

General Language Vocabulary

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

ask, answer, organize, identify, predict, add, subtract, compare, observe, edit, revise, similar, different, question, notes, illustrations, storyboard, graphic organizer

Thinking and Academic Success Skills Vocabulary – Collaboration & Analysis

clarify, modify, adapt, explain, relate, communicate, relationships, working together, group goal, team, analyze, infer, examine parts

Specific Language Vocabulary and Technical Language Vocabulary by Content

Art	theme, content , center of interest, folk art, fine art
Health Education	character traits, uniqueness , emotion words, verbal communication, nonverbal communication, well-being (e.g., personal wellness, social wellness, physical needs, social needs, emotional needs, stress/stressors, distress), over-the-counter (OTC) medicine, prescription medicine, caffeine, tobacco, nicotine, second-hand smoke, drugs, disease, physician, pharmacist
Information Literacy	community action, reflection, design , multimedia production, audio recording, visual display, inquiry process, information, details, definitions, search tools, digital/print resource, format, genre, call number, digital dictionary, digital glossary, citation, <i>Photo Story, PowerPoint, MovieMaker, Animoto, Pixie</i>
Math	patterns, symbol, attribute , estimate, round, place value, digit, equation, unknown number, addition table, multiplication table, multiplication/division vocabulary (e.g., product, quotient, partition, shares), area, area measurement, square unit (e.g., square centimeters, square meters, square inches, square feet)
Music	phrase, rhythm , composer, conductor, melody, verse, refrain, contrasting/repeating pattern, tempo, duple meter, ostinato, pitch, octave, expressive qualities, call and response, (a) round, folk song,
Physical Education	fitness vocabulary (e.g., muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, heart rate, pulse), dribble, pathway, aerobic, yoga
Reading	right-there information, inference , realistic fiction (e.g., narrator, perspective, point of view, central message), informational text (e.g., topic, opinion, main idea, key details, fact, reasons, conclusion), text features (e.g., header, bold print, caption, photograph/illustration, glossary, search box, key words, icons), multiple meanings, root word, prefix, suffix, synonym, noun, verb, adjective
Science and Engineering	height words (e.g., high, low), weight words (e.g., heavy light), tire, wheel , position (e.g., above, below), motion (e.g., push/pull, fast/slow), surface texture, gravity, friction, speed, distance, direction, technological problem, engineering design, design model, scientific investigation words (e.g., testable question, observation, variable, trials)
Social Studies	social skills, concern, respect, compromise, conflict, national holiday , democracy, American democratic principles (e.g., equality, justice, common good), rule/law, enforce, maintain order, citizen (e.g., rights, responsibilities, civic engagement, participate, contribute, community, volunteer, vote, elect), government (e.g., county executive, county council, duties, taxes), business, goods, services
Writing	actions, thoughts, feelings, sentence, paragraph , personal narrative (e.g., title, narrator, dialogue, conclusion), informational writing (e.g., topic, introductory paragraph, opinion statement, hook, main idea, facts, reasons, definitions, details), research (e.g., inquiry question, resources, citation information, author, organization, title, publisher, year of publication, page), pronoun, common noun, proper noun, plural noun, adjective, adverb, contraction, possessives, conjunction, linking word, apostrophe, quotation marks

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**.