

## 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

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

**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://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](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](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>

**General Language Vocabulary**

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

ask, answer, question, predict, repeat, summarize, infer, compare, define, visualize, match, edit, sketch, identify, meaning, graphic organizer, story map, storyboard, dictionary, comma, quotation marks, capitalization, spelling, grammar

**Thinking and Academic Success Skills Vocabulary – Originality and Individual Risk Taking**

create, transform, interpret, alternative, original, unique, individuality, novel idea, predict, adapt, uncertainty, challenge, willingness, inference

**Specific Language Vocabulary and Technical Language Vocabulary by Content**

<b>Art</b>	<b>symbol, culture</b> , popular culture, cultural icon, art elements (e.g., color, lines, patterns, texture), expression, form, style, proportion, artist's style, originality, pop artist, carve, relief sculpture, sketch, portrait, landscape
<b>Health Education</b>	MyPlate.gov, Nutrient Facts Label, healthy diet (e.g., nutrition, nutrients, nutrient dense, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins, fats), food groups (e.g., grain, vegetable, fruit, milk/dairy, protein), healthy weight, food intake, energy output, body image, self-esteem, healthy family, family relationships, conflict, win-win
<b>Information Literacy</b>	realistic fiction (e.g., character's actions, setting, problem, solution, facts, details, theme, illustrations), print/digital resource (e.g., topic, online database, keywords, tabs, media center catalog, call number), citation (e.g., title, author, publisher, copyright date, authority, relevance, currency), <i>Pixie, PowerPoint, Word, Kidspiration, DE Streaming</i>
<b>Math</b>	<b>whole</b> , fraction terms (e.g., partition, equal parts, unit fraction, fractional length, fractional part, fractional value, whole number, halves, fourths, eighths, thirds, sixths, denominator, numerator, equivalent fraction), measurement (e.g., inch, measure, ruler), comparing length and numbers (e.g., long, longer, longest, short, shorter, shortest, less than, greater than, least, greatest, equal to), number line, line plot
<b>Music</b>	<b>culture, theme</b> , accompany, compose, arrange, melody, lyrics, style, form, rhythm, ostinato, tempo, ritardando, expressive qualities, articulation, staccato, legato, solfege, meter signature, phrase, repeat sign, improvisation, call and response, mariachi, folk music, folk dance
<b>Physical Education</b>	<b>sequence</b> , gymnastics, static balance, dynamic balance, weight transfer, tumbling (e.g., front roll, log roll, side roll, cartwheel), springboard, vault, spotter, creative movement, rhythm, grapevine
<b>Reading</b>	<b>inference, cause/effect</b> , informational text, historical fiction, historical events, news article, headline, realistic fiction, literary non-fiction, (e.g., novel, chapters, character trait, character motivation, character feelings, character actions, setting, events, key details, problem, solution, point of view, theme, main idea, author's note, afterword), vocabulary terms (e.g., definition, synonym, antonym, affix, prefix, suffix, temporal word, spatial word, word root)
<b>Science and Engineering</b>	<b>technology, increase, decrease</b> , heat words (e.g., heat energy, heat transfer, temperature, thermometer, light, burning, friction, lubricant, electricity, fuel, insulator, conductor), investigation words (e.g., question, predict, observe, variable, control, evidence, data, analyze/conclude), building structure, material, engineering design words (e.g., problem, ideas, solution, test, refine, present)
<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>author, date, title, symbol, region, media, perspective</b> , North America, Mexico, map words (e.g., continent, country, city, geographic characteristics, mental map, map sketch, political map, physical map, transportation map), map elements (e.g., map key, symbol, legend, compass rose, boundary line), cultural elements (e.g., culture, cultural group, custom, tradition), Ancient Aztecs (e.g., modify environment, shelter, communication, trade, trade routes, transportation networks, goods), financial, spending plan/budget, income, savings, expenses
<b>Writing</b>	<b>author, title, inference, summary, technology</b> , literary analysis (e.g., introduction, character actions, opinion, main idea, theme, body paragraph, reasons, evidence, conclusion), realistic fiction (e.g., main character, setting, problem, solution, dialogue, sensory details, ending, author's note), informative writing (e.g., topic, central point, hook, background information, facts, definitions, details), noun, pronoun, irregular/regular verb, past/present/future tense, linking word/phrase, repeating word/phrase, comparative/superlative adjective, coordinating/subordinating conjunction, temporal word/phrase

**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](#)