



BUILDING VOCABULARY

Building academic vocabulary is something that every university student needs to do throughout their course of study. As you study, you will hear and read lots of new words, some of which are general *academic* words while others will be *specific* to your subject or more *technical*. Both types of words are important to develop your vocabulary overall. Here are some tips to help you learn new vocabulary and use it effectively in your speaking and writing.

| | What you need to know..... |
|---|--|
| 1. Vocabulary building skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep your own vocabulary book to record any new words• Use an English-English dictionary as much as possible. An Advanced English Learner dictionary is especially useful if English is not your first language.• Use a thesaurus to build your knowledge of synonyms and antonyms; learning synonyms is the first step towards effective paraphrasing. Look for the thesaurus in your word document toolbox.• Learn vocabulary in context: use your academic reading to develop the vocabulary you need in your discipline.• Use the learning techniques that work best for you. How do you learn? What helps you to memorise words? |
| 2. Developing academic discourse for particular disciplines | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use texts from each of your subjects• Build your academic vocabulary within the disciplinary context• Learn vocabulary in collocations (words which commonly go together)• Examine how language is used by focusing on your own areas of weakness in a model text (e.g. use of articles, noun plurals, verb tenses)• Analyse sentence and paragraph structure in a text• Analyse textual organisation, use of evidence, etc. |
| 3. General academic vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are resources that provide lists of the most common words and phrases found in academic writing. These are a good starting point for you to find out what you know already and where you could improve. They will also give you ideas for your own speaking and writing.• Academic Word List: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/• Academic Phrasebank: http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/• It is also important to be familiar with the vocabulary your lecturers use in written instructions for your academic assignments and assessment tasks. Have a look at our definitions of task words in our Writing Libguide• It is useful to have a variety of verbs and phrases to use when referring to other people's research in your writing. These are called reporting verbs. Different verbs have slightly different meanings so it is important to check a dictionary to make sure you have chosen the correct word for your purpose.• The Critical Essay Planner lists some transition words and phrases that are commonly used to connect ideas. It also lists some hedging words and phrases that are used to discuss ideas, using cautious language. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>4. Discipline or subject-specific vocabulary</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your JCU subject materials, such as your Subject Outline, your lecture notes and your core readings are the best place to begin finding essential academic vocabulary for each of your subjects. The JCU library has many discipline-specific dictionaries which you can use to understand and expand on vocabulary in your area of study. The 'Using English for Academic Purposes' website provides extensive lists of vocabulary relevant to some subjects: http://www.uefap.com/vocab/vocfram.htm |
| <p>5. Learning new vocabulary</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you discover a new word, here are some questions to ask yourself about that word to help you learn it, remember it and use it in your own speaking and writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What part of speech is it - a verb, noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition or conjunction? Can I use a prefix or suffix with the word? How does it change the meaning of the word? How is it pronounced? What does it mean? How is it used in a sentence? Look for collocations - words often used together Are there any related parts of speech to learn? Does the word have any synonyms or antonyms? |
| <p>6. Remembering new words and phrases</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Practice makes perfect" – the more you use the word or phrase, the more you will remember it! Read and/or listen to words and phrases in context. Write lists with translations and examples; grouping words according to subject/discipline, part of speech, etc. Write sentences that use the new word or phrase. Say or read words and phrases aloud, make audio recordings that you can play back to yourself. Review your learning regularly – make up quick vocabulary tests for yourself each week to check your understanding. Collaborate with other students, especially in your subjects, to share new vocabulary. "Use it or you lose it!" |

Useful links:

- Academic Word List: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/>
- Academic Phrasebank: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>
- Pearson: The Academic Collocation List: <http://pearsonpte.com/research/academic-collocation-list/>
- Understanding task words: <http://libguides.jcu.edu.au/c.php?g=162354&p=1064655>
- Verbs for referring to sources: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/images/stories/Documents/referring-to-sources.pdf>
- The Critical Essay Planner can be found in our [Writing Libguide: https://www.jcu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/123026/jcuprd1_073144.pdf](https://www.jcu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/123026/jcuprd1_073144.pdf)
- 'Using English for Academic Purposes' website: <http://www.uefap.com/vocab/vocfram.htm>