

Increasing Your Academic Vocabulary

Introduction

Increasing your vocabulary will help you to improve the quality of assignments. The following is a list of useful ways in which you can expand your academic vocabulary.

Using academic words lists

Academic word lists can be used to support you develop a more academic style of writing. These lists use common vocabulary rather than academic ideas and do not need to be cited. Using these words does not lead to plagiarism. Here are some to hyperlinks to word banks to help get you started:

[Academic Phrase bank \(University of Manchester\)](#)

[Academic Word List \(UEFAP\)](#)

Using synonyms

Using synonyms can bring variation to your writing. Synonyms are words that are similar or have related meanings to another word, e.g. synonyms of the word 'important' include 'vital,' 'essential' and 'significant.' You can make your writing more formal by choosing certain synonyms, e.g. the phrase 'find out' is informal and can be replaced by a formal synonym 'discover.' Microsoft Word has a synonyms tool by right-clicking on the word you would like to change and clicking on 'synonyms.'

Ways to Build Your Vocabulary

<p>Read</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best way to increase your academic vocabulary is through extensive reading. • Try to read material that is aimed at an academic audience, such as, academic journals or broadsheet newspapers. Reading these sources will expose you to new words that are acceptable in academic writing. • TIP: If you do not want to buy a daily newspaper or an academic journal you will probably be able to find articles from online for free.
<p>Use a dictionary to look up words you don't know</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you encounter a word you do not recognise, you should initially guess its meaning in context. If this is not possible, look it up in a dictionary. This will help you to clarify its meaning and learn in what contexts it can be used. • TIP: When you read academic sources, you may find many words you do not know. Don't panic - you do not have to look all of these up! Initially most people find it easiest to look up unknown words that appear most regularly. Based on words you already know you should be able to understand the gist of the source even if there are some occasional unknown words.
<p>Use a subject specific dictionary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most academic disciplines will have subject specific dictionaries. These include a list of common terminology used within a discipline and what it means. These will include citations that you may not find in a normal dictionary.

Use a thesaurus

- You will be able to enrich your writing through varying the words and phrases that you use. If you keep using the same words when you write, your work can become repetitive, predictable and boring. If you think there are words that you overuse, look them up in a thesaurus. In a thesaurus, you will find details of other words that mean the same thing (synonyms) and how these should be used, some of which you may be able to incorporate into your writing.

Further information

Study Hub@Library provides a range of opportunities for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information, visit the [Study Hub Website](#).