

About [Academic Word Finder](#)

What is academic vocabulary?

Academic vocabulary (also known as Tier 2 vocabulary) words appear in many different contexts and are subtle or precise ways to say relatively simple things, for example “relative” or “accumulate”. The Common Core emphasizes regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary because academic vocabulary helps students access and understand increasing levels of complex texts across all content areas.

Why is academic vocabulary so important?

Academic vocabulary words are often vital to comprehension, reappear in many texts, and frequently are part of a word family or semantic network. Tier two words can carry disproportionate weight in conveying the meaning of a text, and a reader who doesn’t understand even a single of these high-value words might have his or her comprehension thrown off track. For these reasons, the CCSS demand significant instructional attention to these words.

How does the Academic Word Finder help me?

The challenge to teachers is to be alert to the presence of tier two words, determine which ones need to be taught, and which words deserve more time and effort for richer understanding. The Academic Word Finder pulls the most useful academic vocabulary words from a given text.

This tool does not replace teacher judgment; rather it helps to support the teacher and identify the most useful academic words. The Academic Word Finder produces a list of words that are not too common (so that most students know them) and not too rare (so that they are not often found in texts). That said, there may be other academic vocabulary words that are either rare or common that a teacher determines are important to the text.

In addition, the academic vocabulary identified in a text can be a proxy for text complexity, though it does not replace the work a teacher does to fully analyze a text for complexity. [Learn more about text complexity.](#)

How do I use it?

The Academic Word Finder is simple to use.

1. Copy the text you want to analyze. (We recommend starting with 1-3 paragraphs.)
2. Paste that text into the open box on the homepage
3. Select the grade level
4. Click submit
5. Enter the details of your search for your reference – your search is automatically saved!
6. View all of the words in order of appearance in the text. You can change this view to see the words on, above or below grade level. You can also filter to see the words alphabetically.
7. Print, export or email the list

How can I use this word list with my students?

You will notice that there are often multiple definitions for a single word. This is because that word has multiple senses – a hallmark of academic vocabulary.

1. Explain to students that this word has many meanings; teach your students the meaning that matches the one in the text.

2. Use several of the many proven activities to build student
 - Students create pictures to show the meaning of the word
 - Encourage students to use the word in context, either in speaking or writing
 - Create a list of synonyms and antonyms
 - Develop a student dictionary, for students to reference
 - Display a word wall

What other resources can help me?

There are a variety of free resources available to support vocabulary development.

- **Wordsmyth:** Wordsmyth provides a free, online dictionary and has generously contributed the word meanings and sentences to this tool. They also offer a free glossary and test maker.
- **Achieve the Core:** Access model lessons and learn more about the Common Core, academic vocabulary, text complexity, and more!

About Achieve the Core

The digital tools and resources for teachers at achievethecore.org have been made possible by contributions from teachers across the country as well as through generous support from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust and the GE Foundation.

To learn more about Student Achievement Partners and for access to an array of free resources, please visit us at achievethecore.org.