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# Academic Vocabulary **in Use**

Vocabulary reference  
and practice

Self-study and classroom use

**Michael McCarthy**  
**Felicity O'Dell**



# Academic Vocabulary Use

*Academic vocabulary in use* is the perfect study aid for anyone using English for their academic work. Ideal for students of any discipline, from engineers and social scientists to business students and lawyers, it covers all the key vocabulary you will come across in academic textbook, articles, lectures and seminars. The book is designed for students at good intermediate level and above as well as those preparing for IELTS and other university entrance examinations.

## *Academic vocabulary in use*

- 50 easy-to-use two-page units with **clear explanations** of new vocabulary on the left Page and a variety of **practice exercises** on the right.
- Presents new words and expressions in **real-life academic contexts** including extracts from lectures, presentations, essays, tables and graphs.
- includes an **extra 'Reading and vocabulary' section** with longer texts to give you more practice of key vocabulary.
- Has a comprehensive answer key and a phonemic transcriptions of key words in the index to **help with pronunciation**.
- Contains a **handy 'Reference section'** with notes on formal and informal usage, British, Irish and North American vocabulary differences and spelling variations.
- Gives you the **most useful and frequently-used academic vocabulary** based on the Cambridge International corpus and established Academic wordlists.

*Also available:* Study Skills in English  
 Cambridge Grammar for IELTS  
 Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary

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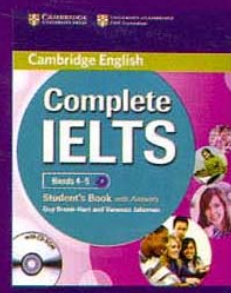
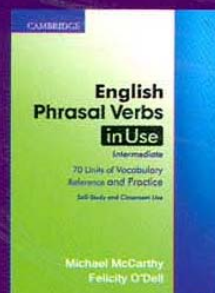
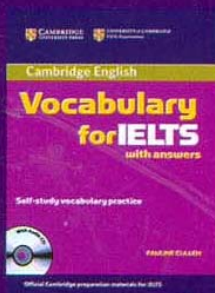
The Cambridge English Corpus is a multi-billion word collection of written and spoken English. It includes the Cambridge Learner Corpus, a unique bank of exam candidate papers.



Our authors study the Corpus to see how English is really used, and to identify typical learner mistakes. This means that Cambridge materials help students to avoid mistakes, and you can be confident the language taught is useful, natural and fully up to date.

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classroom use

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Felicity O'Dell**

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## Working with academic vocabulary

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 What is special about academic English? | <i>discipline, virtually, quantify</i>                       |
| 2 Key nouns                               | <i>theory, model, pattern</i>                                |
| 3 Key verbs                               | <i>attempt, establish, explain</i>                           |
| 4 Key adjectives                          | <i>relevant, abstract, significant</i>                       |
| 5 Key adverbs                             | <i>comparatively, eventually, simply</i>                     |
| 6 Phrasal verbs in academic English       | <i>put forward, go through, write up</i>                     |
| 7 Key quantifying expressions             | <i>a substantial amount, in excess of, no fewer than</i>     |
| 8 Words with several meanings             | <i>set, accommodate, issue</i>                               |
| 9 Metaphors and idioms                    | <i>shed light on, remain in the dark, the battle against</i> |

## Word combinations

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 10 Nouns and the words they combine with | <i>heated debate, pivotal role, to collate results</i>                         |
| 11 Adjective and noun combinations       | <i>important contribution, major concern, widespread support</i>               |
| 12 Verbs and the words they combine with | <i>loosely based on, examine the evidence, suggest an alternative solution</i> |
| 13 Prepositional phrases                 | <i>in conjunction with, on behalf of, for the most part</i>                    |
| 14 Verbs and prepositions                | <i>focus on, consent to, account for</i>                                       |
| 15 Nouns and prepositions                | <i>dissertation on, rationale for, progress towards</i>                        |
| 16 Fixed expressions                     | <i>in a variety of ways, with the exception of, be that as it may</i>          |

## At academic institutions

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 17 Applications and application forms    | <i>entry requirements, referee, deadline</i>      |
| 18 College and university: the UK system | <i>student union, tutorial, research student</i>  |
| 19 Systems compared: the US and the UK   | <i>dormitory, freshman, fraternity</i>            |
| 20 Academic courses                      | <i>diploma, credits, defer</i>                    |
| 21 Study habits and skills               | <i>reading speed, mind map, rote learning</i>     |
| 22 Online learning                       | <i>online community, username, subject header</i> |

## Ways of talking about ...

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 23 Sources                  | <i>primary source, draw on, body of literature</i>      |
| 24 Facts, evidence and data | <i>distort the facts, hard evidence, empirical data</i> |
| 25 Numbers                  | <i>random, tally, estimate</i>                          |
| 26 Statistics               | <i>standard deviation, correlate, proportion</i>        |
| 27 Graphs and diagrams      | <i>pie chart, intersect, decline</i>                    |
| 28 Money and education      | <i>student loan, cost of living, receipt</i>            |
| 29 Time                     | <i>century, simultaneous, in the near future</i>        |
| 30 Cause and effect         | <i>trigger, give rise to, chain reaction</i>            |

## Opinions and ideas

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 31 Talking about ideas          | <i>movement, hypothesis, stance</i>          |
| 32 Reporting what others say    | <i>pinpoint, cast doubt on, implication</i>  |
| 33 Analysis of results          | <i>deduce, outweigh, critical</i>            |
| 34 Talking about meaning        | <i>transparent, comprehend, misinterpret</i> |
| 35 Research and study aims      | <i>objective, to further, instigate</i>      |
| 36 Talking about points of view | <i>impartial, ideology, hold views</i>       |
| 37 Degrees of certainty         | <i>tendency, likelihood, allegedly</i>       |

## Functions

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 38 Presenting an argument      | <i>beyond the scope of, furthermore, the extent to which</i> |
| 39 Organising your writing     | <i>with a focus on, at this point, respectively</i>          |
| 40 Making a presentation       | <i>address a topic, handout, take questions</i>              |
| 41 Describing research methods | <i>carry out a procedure, case study, replicate</i>          |
| 42 Classifying                 | <i>component, consist of, marital status</i>                 |
| 43 Making connections          | <i>correlate with, mutual, interaction</i>                   |
| 44 Comparing and contrasting   | <i>distinction, similarly, whereas</i>                       |
| 45 Describing problems         | <i>experience difficulties, deal with, resolve a problem</i> |
| 46 Describing situations       | <i>context, integral, stable</i>                             |
| 47 Processes and procedures    | <i>simulation, to supplement, output</i>                     |
| 48 Describing change           | <i>expansion, diminish, perceptible change</i>               |
| 49 Evaluation and emphasis     | <i>inadequate, contradictory, acknowledge</i>                |
| 50 Summary and conclusion      | <i>bring to a close, in the final analysis, finally</i>      |

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We acknowledge with gratitude the pioneering work on academic word lists done by Averil Coxhead. In planning this book we made considerable use of her lists at <http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/index.shtml>.

Also, as always, we thank our domestic partners for their patience and support during the writing of this book.

Michael McCarthy & Felicity O'Dell  
Cambridge, April 2007

## Publisher's acknowledgements

Development of this publication has made use of the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC). The CIC is a computerised database of contemporary spoken and written English which currently stands at over one billion words. It includes British English, American English and other varieties of English. It also includes the Cambridge Learner Corpus, developed in collaboration with the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. Cambridge University Press has built up the CIC to provide evidence about language use that helps to produce better language teaching materials.

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## Illustrations

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# To the student and the teacher

## Who is the book for?

This book is for anyone who wants or needs to learn the kind of English which is used in academic contexts. It deals with the kinds of language used in academic textbooks and articles as well as in lectures and seminars. It also presents vocabulary relating to being a student at a university or college in that it covers such topics as *Applications and application forms*, *Money and education* and *Academic courses* associated with university life. It will be particularly useful for students preparing for IELTS or any other examination aimed at assessing whether candidates' English is at a high enough level to study in an academic institution where English is the medium of instruction. It will be helpful for people who need to attend – or indeed give – lectures and presentations in English or to participate in international conferences. It will enable students who have to prepare assignments or write up a dissertation in English to do so in a much more natural and appropriate way.

## What kind of vocabulary does the book deal with?

The book presents and practises the kind of vocabulary that is used in academic speech and writing regardless of which discipline you are concerned with. So it considers words and expressions like *concept*, *cast doubt on*, *put forward a theory* and *come to a conclusion*. It does not deal with the specialist vocabulary of any particular subject such as medicine or physics. Such specialist terms are often relatively easy to master – they will be explained and taught as you study the subject and these words may indeed sometimes be similar in English and your own language. However, it is the more general words used for discussing ideas and research and for talking and writing about academic work that you need to be fully familiar with in order to feel comfortable in an academic environment. Despite the fact that they are much more frequent than specialist words, these more general words are often felt to be more difficult to learn. It is, therefore, extremely useful to approach them in the systematic way suggested by this book.

One positive aspect of this kind of academic vocabulary is that there are relatively few differences depending on whether you are studying in London or New York, Delhi or Sydney, Johannesburg, Dublin, Wellington, Singapore or Toronto or indeed any other place where you may be using English for academic purposes. Academic English tends to be a truly international language and the units of the book focus on vocabulary that will be essential for you regardless of where you are studying now or may study in the future. There are some differences between the words used to describe people and places and these are highlighted in Units 18 and 19. References 3 and 4 also focus on some vocabulary and spelling variations. In the units of the book we use British English spelling conventions except when quoting texts which originally used American spelling.

Much of the vocabulary in the book is neutral in the sense that it is equally appropriate for both written and spoken contexts. We indicate those instances where a word or expression is too formal for use in speech or too informal for use in academic writing.



## How was the vocabulary for the book selected?

The academic vocabulary focused on in this book was all selected from language identified as significant by the Cambridge International Corpus of written and spoken English and also the CANCODE corpus of spoken English developed at the University of Nottingham in association with Cambridge University Press. These enormous corpora include large collections of written and spoken academic text and so it was possible to identify language that is distinctive for academic contexts. We also made considerable use of the Cambridge Learner Corpus, a corpus of tens of thousands of learner scripts from students taking Cambridge ESOL exams all over the world. From this corpus we were able to learn what kinds of errors students taking, for example IELTS, were typically making.

In planning this book we made considerable use of Averil Coxhead's work on developing academic word lists. Her lists can be found at <http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/index.shtml> and we would highly recommend that students of academic vocabulary investigate this site.

## How is the book organised?

The book has 50 two-page units. The left-hand page presents the academic vocabulary to be focused on in the unit. You will usually find examples of academic vocabulary presented in context with, where appropriate, any special notes about their meaning and usage. The right-hand page checks that you have understood the information on the left-hand page by giving you a series of exercises practising the language that was presented.

The units are organised into different sections. The first introductory section includes nine units which look at basic aspects of academic vocabulary such as what is special about academic vocabulary, key verbs and key quantifying expressions. The second section devotes seven units to how words typically combine with one another in academic English. The third section has six units focusing on aspects of life at academic institutions. The fourth section provides eight units discussing ways of talking about such things as numbers, time and cause and effect. Then we have seven units exploring aspects of opinions and ideas and finally there are thirteen units with a functional focus such as organising a text, comparing and contrasting and describing change.

Towards the end of the book you will find six reading texts relating to different academic disciplines with exercises based on the vocabulary in those texts. We hope that you will find these useful examples of how to use texts to expand your knowledge of academic vocabulary in English and would recommend that you read these texts and do the exercises on them even if they relate to an academic subject that is very different from your own.

There are six reference sections dealing with some key areas where we felt it would be useful for you to have lists of items that could not be presented as fully in the main body of the book, i.e. *Formal and informal academic words and expressions*; *Numbers, units of measurement and common symbols*; *British and North American academic vocabulary*; *Spelling variations*; *Word formation* and *Abbreviations*. Where appropriate, these reference sections provide space for you to add further examples of your own.

At the end of the book there is a Key with answers to all the exercises and an Index of all the key words and expressions, indicating the units where they can be found. The pronunciation is provided for standard British English.

## How should I use this book?

We recommend that you work through the nine introductory units first so that you become familiar with key aspects of academic vocabulary and how best to study it. After that you may work on the units in any order that suits you.



## What else do I need in order to improve my academic vocabulary?

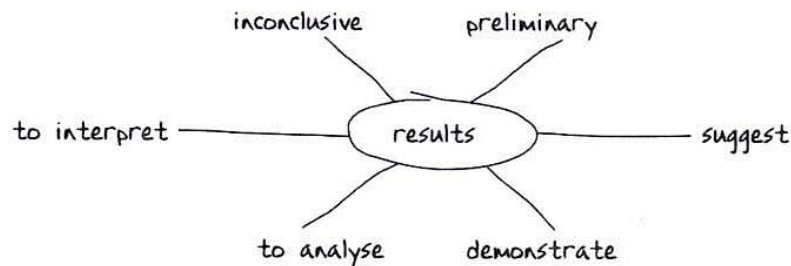
You need a notebook or file in which you can write down all the academic vocabulary that you study in this book as well as any other words and expressions that you come across elsewhere. In your vocabulary notebook it is important to record such things as:

- examples of the word or expression in use
- typical word combinations – you might, for example, note down adjectives or verbs typically associated with a noun that you want to learn or nouns, adverbs or prepositions associated with a verb
- any special features of the word (e.g. is there anything special about its grammar or pronunciation, or is it particularly characteristic of either written or spoken English?).

You may also find it helpful to record such things as:

- any other information that might help you to learn the word (e.g. is it similar to any word in your own language, or does it, perhaps, share a root with a word that you already know?)
- any additional vocabulary that learning this word may help you to learn (e.g. does a verb have a related noun, or what is the opposite of an adjective?)
- any extended uses of the word being focused on (e.g. can it be used metaphorically, or does the same word have other meanings in the way that so many English words do?).

One very important aspect of learning vocabulary is to *organise* the words and expressions you meet; this will help you remember them better. You can do this in a number of ways. In recording words many learners find it helpful to include little diagrams such as *word bubbles*, for example:



or *word forks*, for example:



You also need to have access to a good dictionary. We strongly recommend the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as this provides exactly the kind of information that you need in order to be able to understand and use English vocabulary. Through its example sentences it provides you with the information you need about how the word is used in practice and which other words it typically combines with. The dictionary also helps you with difficult items such as phrasal verbs, for example, indicating whether the object can come before the particle (*set up the apparatus / set the apparatus up; go through a set of calculations*, but not *go a set of calculations through*). This dictionary is available as a book and on a CD-ROM and can also be accessed online at [www.dictionary.cambridge.org](http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org). You will need a specialist dictionary relating to your own subject area as well. Your teacher may also be able to recommend other dictionaries for your specific needs.



As well as working through the units in this book you should read as much English as you can in the subject areas that are most relevant for you. If you are new to studying in English, you could start by reading a textbook aimed at students at a slightly lower level than you are at as far as the subject area is concerned; or you might prefer to read the latest articles in your field from a journal or the internet. If you have easy access to the web, then there is an enormous wealth of material available for you to study and learn from; many universities and other academic institutions have extensive websites, for example, as do professional organisations and journals.

So, good luck with your work in academic English. We hope that the materials in this book will help you to enjoy and to benefit fully from your studies. We hope you will be able to share ideas in a creative, exciting way with scholars from all over the world and we wish you the very best for a successful and rewarding academic life in English.



# What is special about academic English?

## A Everyday words and academic uses

Many words in academic English are the same as everyday vocabulary, but they are often also used with a slightly different meaning, which may be specialised.

<i>everyday or academic use</i>	<i>meaning</i>	<i>academic use</i>	<i>meaning</i>
Standards of <b>discipline</b> in schools have declined.	ability to control oneself or other people	Nanotechnology is a relatively new <b>discipline</b> .	area of study
<b>Underline</b> your family name on the form.	draw a line under it	The research <b>underlines</b> the importance of international trade agreements.	gives emphasis to
The lake was frozen <b>solid</b> .	not liquid or gas	We have no <b>solid</b> evidence that radiation has caused the problem.	certain or safe; of a good standard

## B Vocabulary and academic style

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- In writing, academics use many expressions which are neutral, but they also use formal expressions which are not common in everyday language. Knowing whether an expression is formal or just neutral is important.

<i>neutral</i>	<i>more formal</i>	<i>neutral</i>	<i>more formal</i>
in short, briefly, basically	in sum, to sum up	try	attempt
only	sole(ly)	mainly/mostly	primarily
almost / more or less	virtually	typical of	characteristic of

However, very informal vocabulary may be used in *spoken* academic styles in classes and lectures. Learn to understand such language when you hear it but be careful not to use it in essays and written assignments. Here are some examples of teachers using informal language.

'OK. Have a shot at doing task number 3.' [more formal: Try/Attempt to do ...]

'There's no way schools can be held responsible for failures of government policy.' [more formal: Schools cannot in any way be held ...]

- Academic language tries to be clear and precise, so it is important to keep a vocabulary notebook (see page 8) and learn the differences between similar words, as well as typical word combinations (underlined here).

The building is a prime example of 1920s architecture. [excellent in quality or value]

The group's primary concern is to protect human rights. [main / most important]

## C Noun phrases

Academic language puts a lot of information into noun phrases rather than spreading it out over a whole sentence. For example, instead of saying *Radiation was accidentally released over a 24-hour period, damaging a wide area for a long time*, an academic might say *The accidental release of radiation over a 24-hour period caused widespread long-term damage*. It is therefore important to learn the different forms of a word, for example:

<i>noun</i>	<i>verb</i>	<i>adjective(s)</i>	<i>adverb(s)</i>
accident		accidental	accidentally
quantity/quantification	quantify	quantitative/quantifiable	quantitatively/quantifiably

Finally, be aware of 'chunks' or phrases which occur frequently, and learn them as whole units. Examples: *in terms of*, *in addition*, *for the most part*, *in the case of*, etc. (See Unit 16.)



## Exercises

- 1.1 Each word in the box can be used in two ways, one an everyday way, the other an academic way. Complete each pair of sentences using the same word for both sentences and making any necessary grammatical changes.

generate turn solid confirm identify underline character pose nature focus

- 1 A She loves to \_\_\_\_\_ for photographs in front of her fabulous house.  
B The events \_\_\_\_\_ a threat to stability in the region.
- 2 A It was difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ the camera on the flower as it was so small.  
B We should \_\_\_\_\_ our attention on the most important issues.
- 3 A I called the airline and \_\_\_\_\_ my reservation.  
B The data \_\_\_\_\_ my hypothesis that animal-lovers enjoy better health.
- 4 A The power plant \_\_\_\_\_ electricity for the whole region.  
B This issue always \_\_\_\_\_ a great deal of debate among academics.
- 5 A The murderer was \_\_\_\_\_ from fingerprints discovered at the scene.  
B In this theory of history, progress is closely \_\_\_\_\_ with technology.
- 6 A She became interested in \_\_\_\_\_ conservation.  
B The first lecture in the series was on the \_\_\_\_\_ of human communication.
- 7 A Jim's a very interesting \_\_\_\_\_. I \_\_\_\_\_ hope you meet him.  
B The book attempts to explain the fundamental \_\_\_\_\_ of social life.
- 8 A I saw her \_\_\_\_\_ to her husband and whisper something in his ear.  
B Let us now \_\_\_\_\_ to the subject of town planning.
- 9 A He always \_\_\_\_\_ every new word when he's reading.  
B The study \_\_\_\_\_ the fact that very little research exists.
- 10 A The liquid became \_\_\_\_\_ as the temperature was lowered.  
B The study lacks \_\_\_\_\_ evidence and therefore its conclusions are doubtful.

- 1.2 Use more formal alternatives to the words in bold. Make any necessary grammatical changes.

- 1 The book is **mainly** concerned with the problem of policing the internet.
- 2 **Almost** every school in the county had reported problems with the new system.
- 3 The work of the Institute is not **only** devoted to cancer research.
- 4 **Basically**, we believe we have demonstrated a significant link between the two events.
- 5 We **tried** to find a new way of understanding the data.
- 6 The study is a **really good** example of the way sociologists collect their data.
- 7 The reaction is **typical** of the way large corporations keep control of their markets.
- 8 **There's no way** London can be compared to Sydney as a place to live and work.

- 1.3 Read the text and then answer the questions.

The production of plastics depends heavily on petroleum, but a novel way of making plastics out of sugar could reduce our reliance on oil. The discovery that a chemical in sugar can be converted relatively easily into a substance similar in structure to the material obtained from petroleum has led to the claim that plastics could soon be produced cheaply using the new method.

- 1 Underline two verbs with adverbs after them which it would be useful to learn as pairs.
- 2 Underline two adverbs next to each other which it would be useful to learn together.
- 3 What are the noun forms of the verbs *produce*, *rely*, *discover* and *claim*?



This unit focuses on some frequent and important nouns in academic English. See also Units 10, 11 and 15.

### A General nouns referring to ideas

<i>example (with prepositions underlined)</i>	<i>comment</i>
She wrote an article <u>on the subject of</u> class.	thing which is being discussed, considered or studied
<b>The theme of</b> the poem is emigration.	main subject of a talk, book, etc.
The students were given a list of <b>essay topics</b> .	used to refer to what one is studying or writing about
There was a lively debate on <b>the issue of</b> globalisation in the seminar yesterday.	subject/problem which people are thinking/talking about
Political <b>theory</b> is a popular undergraduate subject. Einstein's <b>theory of</b> gravitation has been questioned recently.	statement of the rules on which a subject of study is based or, more generally, an opinion or explanation
The <b>model of</b> climate change presented in the Stern Review seems to be becoming a reality.	a representation of something as a simple description which might be used in calculations
The book is called ' <b>The Nature of</b> Intelligence'.	main characteristic of something
Human behaviour is based on <b>the principle of</b> least effort.	basic idea or rule that explains how something happens or works

### B More specific nouns connected with ideas and phenomena

<i>example (with prepositions underlined)</i>	<i>comment</i>
Repetition is an important <b>aspect of</b> speech development in children.	one individual part of a situation, problem, subject, etc.
Automatic backup is a <b>feature of</b> the new software.	a typical quality of something
The political motives for the government's actions are <b>beyond the scope of</b> this essay.	range of a subject covered by a book, discussion, class, etc.
The study <b>revealed a pattern of</b> results which could be interpreted in either of two ways.	showed a regularly repeated arrangement
During 2005, the <b>number of</b> violent attacks increased to an alarming degree.	amount or level

### C Nouns referring to ways of thinking, processes and activities

Read these titles of academic books and articles. Note the key nouns and their prepositions.

Micro-organisms in water: their **significance**<sup>1</sup> and **identification**<sup>2</sup>

Renewable energy: a critical **assessment**<sup>3</sup> of recent research

**The Case**<sup>4</sup> for Change: Rethinking Teacher Education. Towards a New **Approach**<sup>5</sup>

**Perspectives**<sup>6</sup> on Ecological Management: A study of public **awareness**<sup>7</sup> of river pollution

Citizens' **Views on** Healthcare Systems in the European Union

Epidemiological **research into**<sup>8</sup> asthma and allergic disease: establishing a standardised **methodology**<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> importance <sup>2</sup> ability to establish the identity of something <sup>3</sup> judgement of the amount, value, quality or importance of <sup>4</sup> arguments, facts and reasons in support of or against something

<sup>5</sup> way of considering something <sup>6</sup> different particular or individual ways of considering something

<sup>7</sup> having special interest in or experience of something, and so being well informed

<sup>8</sup> research is often also used with the preposition on <sup>9</sup> a system of ways of studying something



Research is uncountable. Don't say *They carried out some interesting researches*. To make it plural you can just say 'studies', or 'research studies' or 'pieces of research'.



## Exercises

- 2.1** Look at A. Choose the most appropriate noun to complete each sentence.
- 1 Environmental *topics / issues / principles* should be at the top of today's political agenda.
  - 2 In the exam students had to choose three from a choice of ten essay *subjects / theories / topics*.
  - 3 There are still people who are reluctant to accept Darwin's *model / topic / theory* of evolution.
  - 4 The professor decided to take moral courage as the *issue / theme / model* for his inaugural lecture.
  - 5 The London underground map is best understood as a *model / principle / topic* showing how the different stations relate to one another rather than a precise representation of their distances from each other.
  - 6 The Peter *Issue / Principle / Theme* states that members of a hierarchical group will usually end up being promoted to the point at which they become incompetent.
- 2.2** There are six phrases containing errors underlined in this paragraph. Can you correct them?

The study showed that local police can play an important role in crime prevention. It makes a strong case of boosting the numbers of community police officers although it warns against increasing police presence on the streets at an alarming degree. Its methodological was based on a range of interviews asking members of the public for their views in how best to prevent crime. Unfortunately, how to implement this recommendation was out of the scope of the study but at least it serves a useful purpose in raising awareness to the issue.

- 2.3** Look at these titles of academic books (A–H). Then match them to their subject areas (1–8).

A The Nature of Democracy	1 economics
B The Significance of Dreams	2 education
C The Features of Glaciated Landscapes	3 literature
D The Assessment of Language Skills	4 history
E An Approach to Free Verse	5 geography
F The Identification of Bees	6 psychology
G Perspectives on Modern Taxation	7 politics
H New Perspectives on Cleopatra	8 zoology

- 2.4** Match the beginning of each sentence with the most appropriate ending.

1 The study revealed a regular	scope of your research.
2 The research focuses on one particular	awareness of the problem.
3 The writer makes a powerful	issues facing the world today.
4 The writers take an original	into the environmental effects of nanoparticles.
5 Until recently there was little	approach to their theme.
6 I think you should broaden the	aspect of modern society.
7 To date, there has been little research	pattern of changes in temperature.
8 There are many important	case for restructuring parliament.



In this unit we look at some important verbs in academic English.

### A Verbs for structuring academic assignments

Look at these tasks which students have been given. Note the key verbs.

**Discuss** some of the problems **involved**<sup>1</sup> in **investigating** attitudes to diet and health. Write a critical review of an investigation you have read about, or describe an investigation you yourself could **conduct**<sup>2</sup>. **Consider** the advantages and disadvantages of different methods.

Starting from rest, an aircraft accelerates to its take-off speed of 60 m s<sup>-1</sup> in a distance of 900 metres. **Illustrate**<sup>3</sup> this with a velocity-time graph. **Assuming**<sup>4</sup> constant acceleration, **find**<sup>5</sup> how long the take-off run lasts. Hence **calculate**<sup>6</sup> the acceleration.

'The fact that nations agree to follow international law **demonstrates**<sup>7</sup> that we can **identify**<sup>8</sup> ideals that are trans-national and trans-cultural.' How far is this statement true? Critically **analyse** any recent event which **supports** or **challenges**<sup>9</sup> the statement.

**Examine**<sup>10</sup> how industrial growth has **affected** any two developing countries. **Provide**<sup>11</sup> statistical evidence where necessary and **include** a discussion of likely future trends.

<sup>1</sup> which are part of/included in <sup>2</sup> organise and do <sup>3</sup> draw something in order to explain something <sup>4</sup> accepting something to be true <sup>5</sup> discover by calculating (see 6) <sup>6</sup> judge the number or amount of something and adding, multiplying, subtracting or dividing numbers <sup>7</sup> show, make clear <sup>8</sup> recognise someone or something and say or prove who or what they are <sup>9</sup> questions whether it is true <sup>10</sup> look at or consider carefully and in detail <sup>11</sup> give

### B More key verbs

These extracts from academic books contain other key verbs.

In **developing** methods to explain the significance of health status measures, one can **classify**<sup>1</sup> ways of **establishing**<sup>2</sup> quality of life into two main types.

The length of time spent on the tasks may **account for**<sup>3</sup> the decrease in motivation which **was seen**<sup>4</sup> in many of the participants.

The data **presented**<sup>5</sup> in Chapter 3 **showed**<sup>6</sup> that the age of the subjects was not the main factor.

Political theory **attempts**<sup>7</sup> to build bridges between different schools of political thought.

<sup>1</sup> divide things into groups according to their type <sup>2</sup> discover or get proof of <sup>3</sup> explain <sup>4</sup> see is often used in the passive in academic style <sup>5</sup> given <sup>6</sup> proved <sup>7</sup> (formal) tries

### C Verbs which combine with noun forms of key verbs

Often in academic style, a verb + the noun form of the key verb is used.

verb	verb + noun	example
explain	give/provide/offer an explanation (of/for)	The model <b>provides an explanation</b> for the differences between the two sets of data.
explore	carry out an exploration (of)	Kumar <b>carried out an exploration</b> of music genius.
emphasise	place/put emphasis (on)	The hospital <b>puts a lot of emphasis</b> on training nurses.
describe	give/provide a description (of)	The book <b>gives a description</b> of modern Europe.



The verbs **affect** and **effect** are different. *To affect* means to influence, *to effect* means to make something happen / to bring about. *The burning of fossil fuels has negatively affected the global climate. The procedure has been successful and has effected a return to normal functioning of the engine. See Unit 30 for more on affect and effect.*



## Exercises

3.1 Match each verb from A in the box on the left with its synonym from the box on the right.

affect attempt calculate challenge demonstrate compute distinguish give influence  
identify include investigate provide involve question show study try

3.2 Choose the best verb from B or C to complete these sentences. Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 As can \_\_\_\_\_ from Table II, participation figures have been steadily falling since 1970.
- 2 Different authors have \_\_\_\_\_ for the President's actions in different ways.
- 3 Mendel attempted to devise a system for \_\_\_\_\_ the many different types of pea plant that he grew.
- 4 It is often most effective \_\_\_\_\_ your data in a chart or table.
- 5 The data we have collected \_\_\_\_\_ that there has been a downward trend with regard to job satisfaction over the last 50 years.
- 6 The aim of the research is \_\_\_\_\_ a new software application which will help aviation engineers design more sophisticated aircraft.
- 7 The archaeologists should be able to use carbon dating techniques \_\_\_\_\_ exactly how old the bones are.
- 8 Charles Darwin attempted \_\_\_\_\_ the existence of different species in terms of evolution.

3.3 Explain the difference between the sentences in each pair.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 Greig's article supports Park's theory.       | Greig's article challenges Park's theory. |
| 2 Describe the new tax regulations.             | Discuss the new tax regulations.          |
| 3 Lodhi provides new data.                      | Lodhi considers new data.                 |
| 4 Titova conducted four sets of experiments.    | Titova examined four sets of experiments. |
| 5 Lee established why such changes occur.       | Lee investigated why such changes occur.  |
| 6 Okaz assumed that the data were reliable.     | Okaz proved that the data were reliable.  |
| 7 Illustrate the magnitude of the deceleration. | Find the magnitude of the deceleration.   |
| 8 The events effected economic development.     | The events affected economic development. |

3.4 Rewrite each sentence using the word in brackets and make any necessary changes to other words.

- 1 Erikson's theory explains the fluctuations in the figures for this period. (PROVIDES)
- 2 Bevan explored the relationship between family background and political ambition. (EXPLORATION)
- 3 The book describes the life and times of Abraham Lincoln. (DESCRIPTION)
- 4 Cheng's theory emphasises the importance of extensive reading in language acquisition. (PUTS)

3.5 In academic style, noun phrases can often be used instead of some of the key verbs.



Complete each phrase with the appropriate noun. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 investigate = conduct, carry out an _____ into/of | 4 affect = have an _____ on           |
| 2 illustrate = provide an _____ of                  | 5 attempt = make an _____ to/at       |
| 3 analyse = provide, carry out an _____ of          | 6 classify = make, provide a _____ of |

FOLLOW UP

Using the tasks in A as a model, prepare some assignment topics for students studying any subject that you are familiar with.



## 4

## Key adjectives

For any adjective it is useful to know whether it is typically followed by a specific preposition and whether it has any synonyms (adjectives with a similar meaning) or antonyms (adjectives of opposite meaning).

## A Adjectives and prepositions

Here are some extracts from academic texts, with adjectives followed by *to* or *of*.

Language development is conceived as **relative**<sup>1</sup> **to** one's own past performance, or relative to that of others.

Some of the responses to the questionnaire were **specific**<sup>4</sup> **to** young male respondents. Others were **common**<sup>5</sup> **to** all the respondents.

How can we make science **relevant**<sup>2</sup> **to** environmental policy? Poor communication **between** scientists and politicians is **characteristic**<sup>3</sup> **of** the situation today.

We need to plan technologies which are **appropriate**<sup>6</sup> **to** the needs of small farmers. It was **typical** **of** the farmers in the study that they had a negative attitude to technology.

<sup>1</sup> true to a particular degree when it is being compared with other things <sup>2</sup> connected with what is happening or being discussed <sup>3</sup> (rather formal) typical of <sup>4</sup> only found in <sup>5</sup> belonging to or shared by two or more people or things <sup>6</sup> suitable or right for a particular situation or occasion

## B Adjectives and their opposites

Look at this abstract from a dissertation on drug abuse. In most cases you can work out the meanings of the opposites (which follow each numbered adjective), based on the definitions.

We cannot discuss drug abuse as an **abstract**<sup>1</sup> problem without considering **concrete** examples of abuse and their social consequences. Abuse is rarely a **simple**<sup>2</sup> issue; it usually results from a **complex** set of circumstances. Both **quantitative**<sup>3</sup> and **qualitative** research is necessary to gain a full picture of the situation. By combining research methods, we may obtain an **accurate** picture of the causes and results of abuse, in contrast with the **inaccurate** assessments which often result from purely quantitative studies. A **significant**<sup>4</sup> amount of fear and prejudice surrounds the notion of abuse, and the media have a role which is also not **insignificant** in promoting such fears. The dissertation concludes that **rough**<sup>5</sup> estimates of the number of drug addicts need to be made more **precise** by properly defining addiction.

<sup>1</sup> existing as an idea, not as a material object; opposite: existing in a form that can be seen or felt  
<sup>2</sup> having or made of only one or a few parts <sup>3</sup> based on numbers and statistics; opposite: usually research using non-number-based methods such as interviews, focus groups, etc. <sup>4</sup> important or noticeable <sup>5</sup> fairly correct but not exact or detailed; opposite: exact and accurate

## C Other important, frequent adjectives and typical combinations with nouns

There was an **apparent**<sup>1</sup> **discrepancy** between the two sets of results.  
We noted a **potential**<sup>2</sup> **problem** with the experimental design which we had to deal with first.  
The **principal**<sup>3</sup> **cause** of the failure was a sudden temperature change.  
The research used a **rigorous**<sup>4</sup> **methodology** which had been tested on many occasions.

<sup>1</sup> seeming to exist or be true <sup>2</sup> possible when the necessary conditions exist <sup>3</sup> first in order of importance <sup>4</sup> careful to look at or consider every part of something to make certain it is correct



Remember to say *typical of*, NOT *typical for*. Learn adjectives with the prepositions that often follow them, as in A.



# Exercises

## 4.1 Look at A. Correct the preposition errors in these sentences.

- 1 A lengthy discussion of the advantages of solar power is not relevant with an essay that required you to focus on wind turbines.
- 2 It is typical to the disease for it to start with an itchy rash.
- 3 This methodology is not appropriate about the kind of research you are planning.
- 4 The use of original metaphors is characteristic from the writer's style.
- 5 Relative with previous attempts to explain the phenomenon, this interpretation is quite persuasive.
- 6 The dark hair and eyes are common for all people from the region.

## 4.2 Rewrite each sentence using the *opposite* of the adjective in italics.

- 1 Karlsson checked the figures and agreed with me that they were *accurate*.
- 2 The solution to the problem is a *simple* one.
- 3 Make *rough* calculations before you begin to write up your results.
- 4 The army played a *significant* role in events.
- 5 Hernandez prefers to discuss ideas in *abstract* terms.

## 4.3 Match the adjective on the left with the noun it often combines with on the right.

- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1 apparent  | methodology |
| 2 rigorous  | problem     |
| 3 principal | discrepancy |
| 4 potential | cause       |

## 4.4 Now use one of the combinations from 4.3 to complete these sentences.

- 1 There is an \_\_\_\_\_ in your figures.
- 2 Management's refusal to listen to the workers' demands was the \_\_\_\_\_ of the riots.
- 3 Lamaque devised a \_\_\_\_\_ which has since been used successfully by many other researchers in the field.
- 4 We spotted a \_\_\_\_\_ with our procedure and so we changed it in two areas.

## 4.5 Choose the best adjective from the box to complete these sentences.

qualitative   complex   potential   rigorous   specific

- 1 The plant is difficult to grow and needs very \_\_\_\_\_ conditions to survive.
- 2 His tutor was critical of his work for not being \_\_\_\_\_ enough.
- 3 In the past the northern tribes looked on the tribes of the south as \_\_\_\_\_ enemies.
- 4 We chose a \_\_\_\_\_ approach to our research and interviewed individuals personally.
- 5 A \_\_\_\_\_ set of circumstances led to a civil war in 1897.

**FOLLOW  
UP**

When you come across any of the key adjectives from this unit in your reading, note it down in a phrase so you build up a set of useful phrases using the adjective.



# 5

## Key adverbs

This unit deals with just some of the adverbs that are particularly frequent in an academic context. You will find more in other units throughout this book.

### A Adverbs that compare

adverb	meaning	example
comparatively/ relatively	in comparison with something else	Our sample was <b>relatively/comparatively</b> small.
especially/particularly	more than usual	The process was not <b>especially/particularly</b> difficult.
specially	more than usual (spoken English only) for a specific purpose	The exam was <b>specially</b> hard this year. We used <b>specially</b> designed equipment.
somewhat (opposite: considerably)	(slightly formal) a little, slightly	When we tested younger boys, we obtained <b>somewhat/considerably</b> different results.
primarily	mainly	Amir is <b>primarily</b> interested in bio-physics.
mostly/largely	almost completely (but not totally so)	The research was <b>largely/mostly</b> successful.
directly (opposite: indirectly)	without anything else being involved	The illness is <b>(in)directly</b> linked to poor housing.

### B Adverbs that relate to numbers or time

There are **approximately** 20 varieties of bird in this species. [roughly, about]  
 There are **precisely** 48 different managerial posts in the company. [exactly]  
 Interviewees **frequently** misunderstood one of the questions. [often]  
 We **eventually** obtained the results we were hoping for. [in the end, after some time]  
 Ultimately we plan to repeat the experiment. [finally, after other things have been completed]

### C Adverbs that relate to how things are stated

Hall's latest article **essentially**<sup>1</sup> differs from his earlier work in that it is **explicitly**<sup>2</sup> critical of the government. **Generally**<sup>3</sup>, his disapproval of their policies was only conveyed **implicitly**<sup>4</sup> in his previous writing, but here he **specifically** condemns their handling of a number of issues.

<sup>1</sup> referring to its main characteristics; also **basically** <sup>2</sup> openly <sup>3</sup> usually, also on the whole  
<sup>4</sup> not directly, suggested or implied rather than stated

### D Adverbs that restrict or limit

**merely** = exactly and nothing more: *The medication will **merely** make the symptoms bearable; it will not cure the disease.*

**simply** Note that **simply** can have different meanings. *To **put it simply**, the risks of this approach would seem to outweigh its advantages.* [plainly] *The book presents difficult ideas **simply**, in a way appropriate for the layman.* [easily; someone who isn't a specialist in the field] *The exam results were **simply** dreadful.* [absolutely, without doubt]

**hardly ever** = almost never: *The tribe has **hardly ever** had contact with the outside world.*



**Eventually** means 'in the end'. It does not mean 'perhaps/possibly'.

We will **perhaps/possibly** (NOT **eventually**) discover life on other planets in the future.

**Eventually** [in the end], we were able to interview all 20 children involved in the test.



## Exercises

### 5.1 Look at A and B. Explain the difference between the sentences in each pair.

- 1 Heinrich's experiments were mostly successful.  
Heinrich's experiments were most successful.
- 2 The results were somewhat surprising given the circumstances.  
The results were especially surprising given the circumstances.
- 3 First-year students are directly affected by the new rules relating to tuition fees.  
First-year students are particularly affected by the new rules relating to tuition fees.
- 4 The study is primarily concerned with urban alienation.  
The study is ultimately concerned with urban alienation.
- 5 The team eventually obtained unpredicted results.  
The team frequently obtained unpredicted results.

### 5.2 Choose the more appropriate adverb from the options.

What you are saying is *essentially* / *merely* true. To put it *basically* / *simply*, there is *specially* / *basically* no significant difference between the two writers' theories. However, one of them writes in a *simply* / *precisely* dreadful style while the other has *eventually* / *possibly* a more impressive style than any other contemporary scientist.

### 5.3 Change the sentences using adverbs which mean the *opposite* of the underlined ones.

- 1 There were roughly 350 people living in the village in 1958.
- 2 Parents seldom complained that the school authorities failed to inform them of changes.
- 3 We investigated the problem and initially found some small errors in the calculations.
- 4 The temperature was exactly half a degree lower than the average.
- 5 Singh (1998) is explicitly critical of existing theories of economic growth.
- 6 Soil erosion is specifically caused by water or wind.
- 7 Senior citizens almost always use the internet to communicate with one another.
- 8 The disease is directly linked to environmental factors.

### 5.4 Underline the adverbs in these texts. Then answer the questions.

Marine conservationists are currently attempting to save the world's coral reefs. One plan is to literally glue the damaged reefs back together, using coral artificially raised in underwater labs. Reefs are increasingly under attack from human activity as well as from events occurring naturally, such as hurricanes and tsunamis. A recent UN report warns that 30% of the world's coral reefs have been completely destroyed or are severely damaged.

Scientists have recently discovered that ants can remember how many steps they have taken. By carefully shortening or lengthening the legs of ants, the team observed that short-legged ants apparently became lost and could not easily find their way home to the nest. Similarly, ants with longer legs typically travelled 50% further than they needed to and were also temporarily unable to find the nest. It seems ants can definitely count their steps.

- 1 Which adverb means 'in the same way'?
- 2 Find two pairs of adverbs that mean the opposite of each other.
- 3 Which adverb means the opposite of 'a long time ago'?
- 4 Which adverb means 'more and more'?
- 5 Which adverb could be substituted by *seriously*?
- 6 Which adverb means 'for a limited time'?

**FOLLOW UP**

Find an article of interest to you in your discipline and underline all the key adverbs. Then check that you understand their meaning.



# Key

## 1.1 Unit 1

- |                |              |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1 A pose       | B pose       | 6 A nature     | B nature     |
| 2 A focus      | B focus      | 7 A character  | B character  |
| 3 A confirmed  | B confirmed  | 8 A turn       | B turn       |
| 4 A generates  | B generates  | 9 A underlines | B underlines |
| 5 A identified | B identified | 10 A solid     | B solid      |

## 1.2

- 1 primarily
- 2 Virtually
- 3 solely
- 4 In sum / To sum up (*or* In summary) (See also Unit 40.)
- 5 attempted
- 6 prime
- 7 characteristic
- 8 **In no way/respect can London** be compared to Sydney as a place to live and work. (Note the inversion of the subject (*London*) and verb (*can*) when a negative expression is used at the beginning of the sentence.)

## 1.3

- 1 depends heavily, converted easily, produced cheaply
- 2 relatively easily
- 3 production, reliance, discovery, claim

## Unit 2

### 2.1

- |          |          |             |
|----------|----------|-------------|
| 1 issues | 3 theory | 5 model     |
| 2 topics | 4 theme  | 6 Principle |

### 2.2

The study showed that local police can play an important role in crime prevention. It makes a strong case for boosting the numbers of community police officers although it warns against increasing police presence on the streets to an alarming degree. Its methodology\* was based on a range of interviews asking members of the public for their views on how best to prevent crime. Unfortunately, how to implement this recommendation was beyond the scope of the study but at least it serves a useful purpose in raising awareness of the issue.

\* *methodological* is the adjective form of the noun *methodology*

### 2.3

- |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 G | 2 D | 3 E | 4 H | 5 C | 6 B | 7 A | 8 F |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

### 2.4

- 1 The study revealed a regular pattern of changes in temperature.
- 2 The research focuses on one particular aspect of modern society.
- 3 The writer makes a powerful case for restructuring parliament.
- 4 The writers take an original approach to their theme.
- 5 Until recently there was little awareness of the problem.
- 6 I think you should broaden the scope of your research.
- 7 To date there has been little research into the environmental effects of nanoparticles.
- 8 There are many important issues facing the world today.

## Unit 3

### 3.1

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| affect – influence   | identify – distinguish |
| attempt – try        | include – involve      |
| calculate – compute  | investigate – study    |
| challenge – question | provide – give         |
| demonstrate – show   |                        |