
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Academic vocabulary



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. I'm Neil...

Finn

And I'm Finn. Today's programme is all about academic English.

Neil

If you are going to study or you are studying at an English-speaking university, you might be wondering how you'll cope with understanding lectures and academic texts...

Finn

... and writing essays.

Neil

Yes. Academic English is different to the English people speak and write every day...

Finn

It's more formal and uses higher level words. So in today's programme, we'll give you ideas for understanding words and phrases that you'll come across ...

Neil

... and some advice for writing essays and giving presentations.

Finn

We'll also give you tips for studying in English... But first, let's look at three main features of academic English: difficult English vocabulary ...

Neil

... specialist subject vocabulary ...

Finn

...and language for organising essays and presentations.

Neil

Now when you come across a word you don't know in an academic text or lecture, you can try to guess its meaning by looking at the context ...

Finn

... or by seeing if the word looks like a word in your own language.

Neil

This is a particularly useful strategy if your own language has lots of words from Greek or Latin as many of the words used in academic English come from those languages. Words, for example, like **microscopic**, which means tiny, or **analysis**, which means study...

Finn

... or **regeneration**, which means renewal.

Neil

Another strategy for working out the meaning is to look at how a word is constructed. Academic English words often have prefixes and suffixes.

Finn

Remember, a prefix comes before the main part of the word and can change a word's meaning. For example, the prefix **de**, spelt **d-e**, means removing something, or reversing something ...

Neil

... so **de-population** means a reduction in the number of people somewhere, and **de-forestation** means clearing of trees from an area.

Finn

Suffixes are attached to the end of words. A common suffix in English is **-ise**, spelt **i-s-e**. Examples of words with **-ise** are **stabilise**, **characterise** and **specialise**. And these words are spelt with **-ize** in American English.

Neil

That's right, they are. Now another common suffix is **-ate**, spelt **a-t-e**. Words with this suffix are **differentiate** and **duplicate**...

Finn

Specialist subject words may also cause difficulty. Now you can help yourself in two ways: Firstly, prepare yourself before lectures. Find some texts on your subject, on the internet or in journals and magazines, and study the recurring specialist words in those texts.

Neil

Yes, and to help yourself with this get hold of an English-English dictionary, and an English subject dictionary – for example of Medicine, or Law, or Linguistics.

Finn

And secondly, listen to English radio and watch TV – now there are lots of specialist features which can help improve both your general and specialist English – and of course the BBC website has sections which have stories on technology, and science, and arts, which can also help.

Neil

When writing your academic piece or giving a presentation, you will need to structure and organise your writing or presentation by using signposting language.

Finn

You use signposts to indicate important parts of your essay such as stating its purpose, its structure, your views, the main points, and the direction of the argument and conclusions at the end as well.

Neil

Linking words and phrases show connections between sentences and paragraphs.

Finn

Yes, so Neil, let's give some examples of signposts. Firstly, for starting a piece of writing are...

Neil

The aim of this study is to ...
This essay argues that ...

Finn

Yes. And how about for ending it ...

Neil

Finally....
In conclusion...

Finn

And some examples of linking words and phrases are...

Neil

First(ly), ... second(ly), ... finally, ...

Finn

And for adding something, you could write ...

Neil

In addition, ... furthermore, ...

Finn

... and if you want to show contrast, you might write ...

Neil

... **however, ... nevertheless, ... on the other hand, ...**

IDENT

6 Minute Vocabulary from BBC Learning English.

Finn

And now for some tips for getting the best out of studying in English.

Neil

OK, here's a good one. Have a study buddy – that's someone you can study with. You can test each other and support each other.

Finn

And another one, set aside time for regular language study in addition to your academic study.

Neil

Time for a quiz. Complete the sentences. Number one: Many words in academic English come from a) Latin words, b) American words or c) newspapers?

Finn

It's a) Latin words. Now question two: A good way to start an essay is a) for example, b) in conclusion or c) this essay argues that?

Neil

And it's c) this essay argues that.

Finn

And the last question is: A good way to end an essay is a) on the other hand, b) in conclusion or c) this essay argues that?

Neil

And the answer is b) in conclusion. There's more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Do join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away

microscopic

analysis

regeneration

depopulation

deforestation

stabilise

characterise

specialise

differentiate

duplicate

Signposting language

Starting

The aim of this study is to ...

This essay argues that ...

The main questions addressed in this paper are ...

This paper begins by ... It will then go on to ... Finally, ...

Ending

Finally, ...

In conclusion, ...

Linking words and phrases

Listing:

First(ly), ...

Second(ly), ...

Finally, ...

Adding:

In addition, ...

Furthermore, ...

Showing contrast:

However, ...

Nevertheless, ...

On the other hand, ...

Giving a reason:

For this reason, ...

... because ...

... because of ...

... due to ...

Indicating result or consequence:

Therefore, ...

Thus, ...

As a result, ...

Consequently, ...

Giving examples:

For example, ...

For instance, ...

To exemplify, ...