

# The Academic Word List

What is the Academic Word List? Why does it matter? How can it help you get a higher TOEFL Score?

Let's start with what many Vietnamese students hoping to go to college or study abroad already know. TOEFL scores count and focusing on the Academic Word List (AWL) helps students score higher on the TOEFL—across the curriculum.

English teachers naturally notice and appreciate a strong vocabulary, and academic writing requires a more formal register than casual oral speech. Standardized tests also reward a rich vocabulary and often explicitly test vocabulary skills. Nuance and precision can also be displayed by finding the appropriate word. Therefore, English language learners naturally seek to develop a strong academic vocabulary in order to succeed as college and university students.

Yet what are the key words that a college student needs for academic success in English? Professor Averil Coxhead at the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand studied a wide range of academic texts across disciplines in the late 1990s. He culled 570 word families that he deemed vital for college preparation and created the Academic Word List. The list was further divided into 10 sub-lists, from the most frequent to the least frequent. (We've alphabetized the 10 sub-sets to easily look up words in the dictionary.)

Because of Coxhead's systematic approach and the clear need for this type of focused vocabulary list to help ambitious, college bound international students, the AWL quickly established itself within academic high schools around the world. Many intensive English programs also adopted the AWL for their college prep programs, creating a niche within the ESL/EFL world. Although an intense controversy has arisen over the extensive focus on this vocabulary list, motivated students (like you!) should become at least familiar with the AWL.

Let's begin with better English conversations in our English classrooms. Adding more AWL words and teaching explicit vocabulary enrichment exercises—in your writing and speaking—is a simple, effective method. Please pay extra attention to these words in your academic courses.

Here for your reading pleasure is the entire Academic Word List (AWL) in 10 subsections.

**SUBLIST 1**

analysis  
 approach  
 area  
 assessment  
 assume  
 authority  
 available  
 benefit  
 concept  
 consistent  
 constitutional  
 context  
 contract  
 create  
 data  
 definition  
 derived  
 distribution  
 economic  
 environment  
 established  
 estimate  
 evidence  
 expert  
 factors  
 financial  
 formula  
 function  
 identified  
 income  
 indicate  
 individual  
 interpretation

involved  
 issues  
 labour  
 legal  
 legislation  
 major  
 method  
 occur  
 percent  
 period  
 policy  
 principle  
 procedure  
 process  
 required  
 research  
 response  
 role  
 section  
 sector  
 significant  
 similar  
 source  
 specific  
 structure  
 theory  
 variables

**SUBLIST 2**

achieve  
 acquisition  
 administration  
 affect  
 appropriate

aspects  
 assistance  
 categories  
 chapter  
 commission  
 community  
 complex  
 computer  
 conclusion  
 conduct  
 construction  
 consequences  
 consumer  
 credit  
 cultural  
 design  
 distinction  
 elements  
 equation  
 evaluation  
 features  
 final  
 focus  
 impact  
 injury  
 institute  
 investment  
 items  
 journal  
 maintenance  
 normal  
 obtained  
 participation  
 perceived

positive  
 potential  
 previous  
 primary  
 purchase  
 range  
 region  
 regulations  
 relevant  
 resident  
 resources  
 restricted  
 security  
 select  
 site  
 sought  
 strategies  
 survey  
 text  
 tradition  
 transfer  
  
**SUBLIST 3**  
 alternative  
 circumstance  
 comments  
 compensation  
 component  
 consent  
 considerable  
 constant  
 constraints  
 contribution  
 convention

coordination  
 core  
 corporate  
 corresponding  
 criteria  
 deduction  
 demonstrate  
 dominant  
 document  
 emphasis  
 ensure  
 excluded  
 framework  
 funds  
 illustrated  
 immigration  
 implies  
 initial  
 instance  
 interaction  
 justification  
 layer  
 link  
 location  
 maximum  
 minorities  
 negative  
 outcomes  
 partnership  
 philosophy  
 physical  
 proportion  
 published  
 reaction

registered	dimensions	retained	external	version
reliance	domestic	series	facilitate	welfare
removed	emerged	statistics	fundamental	whereas
scheme	error	status	generated	monitoring
sequence	ethnic	stress	generation	
sex	goals	subsequent	image	<b>SUBLIST 6</b>
shift	granted	sum	liberal	abstract
specified	hence	summary	license	accurate
sufficient	hypothesis	undertaken	logic	acknowledged
task	implementation		marginal	aggregate
technical	implications	<b>SUBLIST 5</b>	medical	allocation
techniques	imposed	academic	mental	assigned
technology	integration	adjustment	modified	attached
validity	internal	alter	monitoring	author
volume	investigation	amendment	network	bond
	job	aware	notion	brief
<b>SUBLIST 4</b>	label	capacity	objective	capable
access	mechanism	challenge	orientation	cited
adequate	obvious	clause	perspective	cooperative
annual	occupational	compounds	precise	discrimination
apparent	option	conflict	prime	display
approximate	output	consultation	psychology	diversity
attitudes	overall	contact	pursue	domain
attributed	parallel	decline	ratio	edition
civil	parameters	draft	rejected	enhanced
code	phase	discretion	revenue	estate
communication	predicted	equivalent	stability	exceed
commitment	principal	enable	styles	expert
concentration	prior	energy	substitute	explicit
conference	professional	enforcement	sustainable	federal
contrast	project	entities	symbolic	fees
cycle	promote	evolution	target	flexibility
debate	regime	expansion	transition	furthermore
despite	resolution	exposure	trend	gender

ignored  
incentive  
incidence  
incorporated  
index  
inhibition  
initiatives  
input  
instructions  
intelligence  
interval  
lecture  
migration  
minimum  
ministry  
motivation  
neutral  
nevertheless  
overseas  
preceding  
presumption  
rational  
recovery  
revealed  
scope  
subsidiary  
tapes  
trace  
transformation  
transport  
underlying  
utility

**SUBLIST 7**

adaptation  
adults  
advocate  
aid  
channel  
chemical  
classical  
comprehensive  
comprise  
confirmed  
converted  
contrary  
couple  
decades  
definite  
deny  
differentiation  
disposal  
dynamic  
eliminate  
empirical  
equipment  
extract  
file  
finite  
foundation  
global  
grade  
guarantee  
hierarchical  
identical  
ideology  
inferred

innovation  
insert  
intervention  
isolated  
media  
mode  
paradigm  
phenomenon  
priority  
prohibited  
publication  
quotation  
release  
reverse  
simulation  
solely  
somewhat  
submitted  
successive  
survive  
thesis  
topic  
transmission  
ultimately  
unique  
visible  
voluntary

**SUBLIST 8**

abandon  
accompany  
accumulation  
ambiguous  
appendix

appreciation  
arbitrary  
automatically  
bias  
chart  
clarity  
commodity  
complement  
conformity  
contemporary  
contradiction  
crucial  
currency  
denote  
detected  
deviation  
displacement  
dramatic  
eventually  
exhibit  
exploitation  
fluctuations  
guidelines  
highlighted  
implicit  
induced  
inevitably  
infrastructure  
inspection  
intensity  
manipulation  
minimizes  
nuclear  
offset

paragraph  
plus  
practitioners  
predominantly  
prospect  
radical  
random  
reinforced  
restore  
revision  
schedule  
tension  
termination  
theme  
thereby  
uniform  
vehicle  
via  
virtually  
visual  
widespread

**SUBLIST 9**

accommodation  
analogous  
anticipated  
assurance  
attained  
bulk  
behalf  
ceases  
coherence  
coincide  
commenced

concurrent	refine	integrity
confined	relaxed	intrinsic
controversy	restraints	invoked
conversely	revolution	levy
concurrent	rigid	likewise
device	route	nonetheless
devoted	scenario	notwithstanding
diminished	sphere	odd
distorted	subordinate	ongoing
duration	supplementary	panel
ethical	suspended	persistent
erosion	team	posed
format	temporary	reluctant
founded	trigger	so-called
incompatible	unified	straightforward
inherent	vision	undergo
insights	violation	whereby
integral		
intermediate	<b>SUBLIST 10</b>	
manual	adjacent	
mature	albeit	
mediation	assembly	
military	collapse	
minimal	colleagues	
mutual	compiled	
norms	conceived	
overlap	convinced	
passive	depression	
portion	encountered	
preliminary	enormous	
protocol	forthcoming	
qualitative	inclination	

Source: Wikitionary – Academic Word List accessed on 2/15/09 and alphabetized on 6/22/10.