Expand Your English

A Guide to Improving Your Academic Vocabulary

Steve Hart

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CONTENTS

Introduction 1

PART A: Two Hundred Key Academic Terms 5

1 **accomplish accumulate acquire actively adhere adjustment advanced advent advocate align** 7

2 **allege alleviate allocate ambiguity amendment apparatus apparent applicable arbitrary arguably** 14

3 **articulate assert assign assumption attain attribute authentic beneficial capability characteristic** 21

4 **clarify coherent coincide collectively comparable compile complexity comprehensive conception conflicting** 28

5 **considerable consistency consolidate constituent constitute constraint contemporary contend continuity contradictory** 36

6 **contributor conventional convey coordinate correlation correspond culminate cumulative decisive definitive** 43

7	**demonstrate denote depiction derive designate desirable determine differentiate discern disclose**	51
8	**discourse discrepancy discrete disparity distinction elaborate elicit embody emerge encompass**	58
9	**endorse enhance enlist entail envision equip equivalent establish exemplify explicit**	66
10	**exploration extensive facilitate feasible formulate frame functional fundamental gauge generate**	73
11	**growing guiding hypothesize hypothetical imperative implement implication implicit incorporate inevitably**	81
12	**infer informed inherent initially insight instrumental integral integrate intensify interpret**	88
13	**intrinsic magnitude manifest marginal maximize minimal modify monitor normative notably**	96
14	**notion object offset omit optimal outline oversee paradox partial perception**	103
15	**persistent pervasive plausible portray precede preclude predominantly preliminary premise prevalent**	110
16	**primarily probe problematic prominent prone proponent prospective proximity recall recognition**	117

17 **refine reflect reinforce relatively reliance renewed replicate reportedly resolve respective** 125

18 **robust routinely salient signify similarity situate specialize speculation standing steadily** 133

19 **subjective subsequently substantial sufficiently suitability susceptible symbolize systematic tendency theoretical** 140

20 **trait transition underlying undertake undoubtedly unified utilize variance verify viable** 147

Final Check for the Top 200 155

PART B: Academic Word Categories 157

CATEGORY: By word type

21 NOUNS: Action nouns 159

22 VERBS: Reporting verbs 167

23 ADJECTIVES: Evaluative adjectives 172

24 ADVERBS: Linking adverbs and sentence adverbs 178

CATEGORY: By word meaning

25 WORDS for unity and division 183

26 WORDS for fact and fabrication 188

27 WORDS for change 193

28 WORDS for amount and size 198

CATEGORY: By area

29 WORDS for introducing aims and objectives 202

30 WORDS for models, data, and figures 205

31 WORDS for interviews and questionnaires 211
32 WORDS for reviewing and concluding 217

Appendix: Noun collocates of the top 200 221
About the author 225
Index: Top 200 by part of speech 226
General index 229

Introduction

A strong ambition of many non-native English writers is to expand their vocabulary. One of the best ways to approach this is by reading as much as possible. Many learners also use dictionaries and word lists to try to increase the number of words they know. But how effective are these resources, and how many words are actually retained and, importantly, employed by writers in their essays and assignments?

The answer is likely to be very few. While reading and looking up words in a dictionary can improve receptive vocabulary (understanding words when hearing or reading them), it is less effective for developing productive vocabulary (actively producing appropriate words when writing). Learners often feel frustrated when writing in English because they cannot find the words to express their ideas effectively. The reason is primarily the limited words at their disposal and the worry that the words they do know are too 'unacademic' and therefore unsuitable. Increasing one's receptive vocabulary is certainly useful, but productive vocabulary is the key to writing well in English and producing good academic work. *Expand Your English* has been designed for this purpose, by targeting 200 key academic phrases* that learners may well have heard of, or even know how to use, but probably do not use as often as they should in their writing. Some of the terms may seem fairly obvious or familiar, but often non-native speakers fail to employ them in their writing and either fall back on the 'safe' elementary term or use a phrase or metaphor picked up socially. It is also important to remember

* The 200 terms were chosen based on how frequently they occur in academic writing (drawn from three academic corpora), how useful they are to non-native speakers, and how likely they are to be missing from a learner's productive vocabulary. They were selected after consulting three academic written English corpora: the British Academic Written English Corpus (BAWE), the academic word list of the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and the academic word list devised by Averil Coxhead at the University of Wellington. COCA listed the words by the frequency with which they occurred in published academic texts, so this was used as a base upon which I added the other two word lists and looked for matches. Words featuring in West's General Service List (GSL) (1953) were rejected, as were any others deemed by me to be in frequent current use (after consulting my own personal collection of 600 essays written by Chinese postgraduates—on the condition they had been used correctly—that I had proofread between 2006 and 2015). The terms appearing only on a subject-specific list were then further scrutinized for their suitability. The most frequent 200 words (top of the COCA frequency list plus featuring in BAWE and Coxhead minus appearing in West and rejected through my own judgement) were then selected, and an attempt was made to include the remaining 1,000 or so in Part B of the book.

that there is just as much worth in knowing when not to use a certain word as when to use it.

There are three key areas to consider when trying to increase productive vocabulary, and these are the foundation of *Expand Your English*. They are essential to retaining the learnt words and retrieving them when needed.

Understanding: knowing the various definitions of the term and the words the term is used alongside

Context: knowing when and how to use the term

Familiarity: encountering the term regularly and in various contexts

In order for writers to retain, retrieve, and reuse the 200 terms that form Part A of the book, they have been divided up into sets of ten. Each set is introduced and then revisited. The three areas (understanding, context, and familiarity) that the book concentrates on will aid this process of remembering and retaining.

In this part, the reader may choose to tackle each set of ten terms in order and work his or her way through the book. Alternatively, an effective way to retain and embed the terms into memory is to read the first stage of each set, do the first checks, and then move on to set two. Once all twenty sets have been read and the questions answered, the reader can advance to the second stage of set one and so on.

BEGIN
SET 1 First stage: read through
SET 1 First check: complete the exercises
SET 2 First stage: read through
SET 2 First check: complete the exercises

When all the first stages are complete, proceed to the second stages.

SET 1 Second stage: read through
SET 1 Second check: complete the exercises

The second part of the book categorizes key academic terms according to function, meaning, and the areas of an essay in which they are likely to be relevant. Again, context and familiarity are the objectives. Some of the 200 key words reappear in this part, to reinforce the learning. An index is also provided, with chapter numbers rather than page numbers to encourage the reader to search for the term within the entries and form links rather than be directed to the exact location.

Dictionaries are usually consulted only when a new word is encountered. *Expand Your English* shows the learner which words to encounter for effective and professional academic writing. As mentioned, the only way to increase productive

vocabulary is to explore words in detail and to keep revisiting them—that is the reason part one is dedicated to only a handful of words. Revisiting the terms later (having learnt many others in between) will help the reader to embed the terms and increase their familiarity. Soon they will be in productive vocabulary ready for the next assignment.

It is a pity when good subject knowledge and creative ideas are undermined by weak or repetitive writing. The 200 key terms and countless others contained in *Expand Your English* will go a long way to preventing this common problem from occurring in the papers of students and researchers at academic institutions.

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Steve Hart
2016

Part A

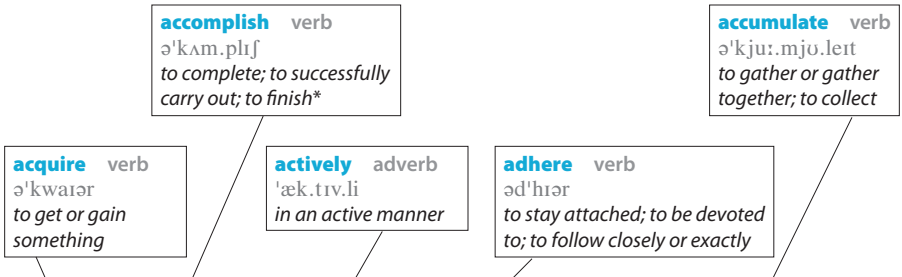
Two Hundred Key Academic Terms

The definitions, collocations, and contexts of use for 200 academic terms are provided in this section. Usage notes give further explanation where needed, and exercises after each section test the understanding of both meaning and suitability.

1

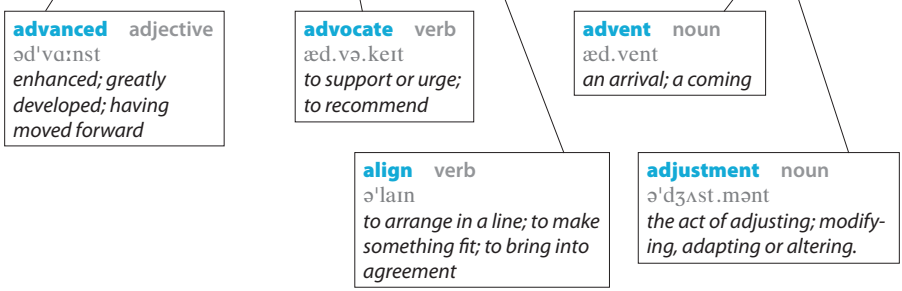
accomplish accumulate acquire actively adhere adjustment advanced advent advocate align

First stage: Introducing the terms



In order to **accomplish** these objectives, we will need to **accumulate** evidence over the course of the three observation sessions. Once the evidence has been **acquired**, we can **actively** seek participants for phase two. As with the initial phase, phase two will **adhere** to the university's policy on ethics (see Appendix 3).

Any **advanced** study will require the researcher to make **adjustments** at some stage. Most guidelines also **advocate** the use of backup files. With the **advent** of 'smart' software, we have been able to **align** multiple aspects of the study and plan effectively.



* The definitions used throughout this book have been obtained from Cambridge Learners online dictionary, dictionary.com, the free dictionary online, Merriam Webster's online dictionary, or a combination of them.

First check

A Circle the verbs in this list.

adjustment accumulate acquire advent adhere align

B Select a word from the ten key terms to match each definition.

in an active manner _____

to successfully carry out _____

an arrival _____

to bring into relation or agreement _____

C Underline the terms that are misspelled in this extract.

This information can be aquired fairly easily, but ajustments will need to be made to reporting to aline with other companies in the industry. This will be actively pursued in April, so the firm can accomplish the aims set out in Document 12. Hopefully, this will lead to acculminating more revenue.

Second stage: Collocations and usage

Accomplish is a regular verb. Its past participle is **accomplished** and its present participle is **accomplishing**. It has a related noun form, **accomplishment**.

Better than do, get done *What does this mean?* Well, instead of writing 'do' or 'get done', you could choose the more academic term 'accomplish'.

Accomplish is often used alongside the nouns 'aim', 'goal', 'objective', and 'task'.

It will also indicate how to accomplish the aims set out in section three.

Explaining the task was the next step. This was accomplished by asking the three demonstrators to . . .

Answers: **A** accumulate, acquire, adhere, align, advent, accomplish, align **B** actively **C** ~~aquired~~ / acquired, ~~ajustments~~ / adjustments, ~~aline~~ / align, ~~acculminating~~ / accumulating

Usage notes: 'Accomplish' is usually employed in its past participle form to explain how something was done. 'Achieve' is also an option.

The aim was to provide a representative sample. This was accomplished/achieved through the use of . . .

When describing a person, the past participle has a different meaning. Here it suggests 'highly trained or skilled'.

He was an accomplished scholar and developed several theories relating to . . .

Accumulate

is a regular verb. Its past participle is **accumulated** and its present participle is **accumulating**. It has a related noun form, **accumulation**.

Better than add, amass

Accumulate is often used alongside 'evidence' and 'knowledge'.

*The next step was to accumulate all the evidence.**

Knowledge of the system will need to be accumulated at some stage.

It is commonly used with the adverbs 'gradually' and 'rapidly'.

These errors accumulate rapidly if unchecked.

Usage notes: There are two points to consider here. First, the spelling: it is 'accumulate' not 'acculminate'. Second, there is no need to follow the verb with 'together'. *All the evidence was then accumulated ~~together~~.*

Acquire

is a regular verb. Its past participle is **acquired** and its present participle is **acquiring**. It has a related noun form, **acquisition**.

Better than get, get hold of

It is often employed alongside the nouns 'information', 'knowledge', and 'skills'.

This information can be acquired from a number of sources.

Learners will acquire knowledge almost immediately.

Unfortunately, she did not acquire any language skills during the course.

* The examples used throughout the book are from the essays of Chinese postgraduate students. Each one has been carefully modified to ensure anonymity while retaining the essence of the sentence.

Actively is an adverb that usually comes before the verb it is modifying.

Better than keenly, energetically, really

Actively is used with a variety of verbs, including 'encourage', 'engage', 'involve', 'participate', 'promote', 'seek', and 'support'.

We need to actively encourage this behaviour in order for it to spread throughout the organization.

Usage notes: As with most adverbs, the writer needs to ask whether the verb actually requires an adverb, as it might be strong enough on its own. 'Actively' is useful when emphasizing that a real effort is being made. *They are actively working to change perceptions of this often-persecuted group.*

Adhere is a regular verb. Its past participle is **adhered** and its present participle is **adhering**. It has related noun forms, **adherence** and **adherent**.

Better than obey, stick to, follow

Adhere is used with a variety of nouns, the most common being 'guidelines', 'principles', 'procedures', 'rules', 'standards', and 'traditions'. The preposition 'to' always follows adhere.

The procedures are bound to provide successful results once they are adhered to effectively.

I will adhere to these ethical guidelines throughout the process.

Usage notes: The noun form 'adherent' names a person who is a supporter or believer of a group, party, theory, or set of ideas. (See also 21.)

She is an adherent of the Belton Method.

Adjustment is a countable noun with a related verb form, **adjust**.

Better than change, tweak

This also allows behavioural adjustments to be made, as an entrepreneur may have different options available.

Usage notes: Adjustment works well when discussing small changes, as in 'minor adjustment' or 'slight adjustment'. Often, adjustment is used for when something physically needs to be moved; when reports or models need to be changed, then 'alteration' or 'amendment' is better.

Advanced is an adjective that can be used directly before a noun to modify it (e.g., *an advanced case*) or after a linking verb* (e.g., *It seemed advanced*). It is the past participle of the verb **advance**. The related noun form is **advancement**.

Better than later, better, complicated, ahead

Advanced is used with a variety of nouns including 'case', 'degree', 'level', 'skills', 'system', 'technology', and 'technique'. Here are examples of the two ways to use the adjective—the first as a noun modifier and the second with a verb.

It is an advanced system and therefore requires little manual input.

We require a system that is not only advanced but also user-friendly.

Usage notes: Advanced has several meanings. The most common relate to something being progressive or innovative and something that is complex or at a higher level. Unlike most past participles, advanced can be used in an active way when modifying the noun (instead of just having a passive meaning).

Advent is a noun and is often used as part of a phrase. There are five common expressions that 'advent' occurs in, all of which end in 'of'.

Better than beginning, start

Before the _____ of Following the _____ of

Since the _____ of Until the _____ of With the _____ of

It can also be used between a definite article and 'of'.

The advent of heterogeneous architectures in mainstream industry had a significant influence on mainstream software.

Advocate is a regular verb. Its past participle is **advocated** and its present participle is **advocating**. It has related noun forms, **advocate** and **advocacy**.

Better than back, follow, stand up for

Spera (2005) advocated that it is critical for families and schools to work together.

* Linking verbs connect the subject of the sentence to words (e.g., adjectives) that are describing the subject. The key linking verb is *to be* (with its various forms *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*). Other linking verbs include *appear*, *become*, *feel*, *grow*, *look*, *prove*, *remain*, *seem*, *smell*, *sound*, *taste*, *turn*.

Usage notes: Advocate is usually employed when an expert or someone with experience gives support or backs something.

The Ministry advocates the use of this system in schools.

The noun form 'advocate' is spelled the same as the verb but pronounced differently. Verb, ˈæd.və.keɪt, noun, ˈæd.və.kət (note the extended ending on the verb). The noun refers to someone who supports something (see also 21).

He is an advocate of student-centered learning.

Align is a regular verb. Its past participle is **aligned** and its present participle is **aligning**. It has related noun forms, **alignment** and **realignment**.

Better than make straight, line up, side with

Align can be used with or without an object. When an object is used, the verb is often followed by 'with'.

Obviously, the two paths at some stage need to align.

The measures taken will need to align with the mission statement.

It is often used with the following plural nouns: 'efforts', 'interests', 'policies', 'programmes'.

When their interests align, we see a more productive environment.

Certain adverbs can be used with align including 'closely', 'naturally', and 'perfectly'.

Their methods needed to be closely aligned with institutional policy.

Usage notes: Align has two distinct meanings. The first is to line two things up so they are straight, either in a physical, literal sense or by concepts or ideas. The second is to show that someone or something supports or is in agreement with something else; for instance, the views of two people could align.

Again, an assessment should be made on whether the emphasis of the adverb is really adding anything to the verb. Saying that something aligns is sufficient most of the time (without the need for 'closely' or 'exactly'), because the verb alone implies that the two things are parallel or a match.

Second check

A Which of the ten key terms do these synonyms relate to? The first one has been done for you.

change, alteration **adjustment**

encourage, support _____

obtain, secure _____

observe, follow _____

B Replace the struck-through word with a word from the ten available.

With the ~~*start*~~ _____ of the Jazz Age came a new outlook on how to . . .

A simple ~~*change*~~ _____ to the speed should resolve the issue.

This will only occur once the *most* ~~*complex*~~ _____ method has been employed by the participants.

We ~~*got*~~ _____ this beaker from Cao Pharmaceuticals, Shenzhen.

C Select an appropriate option to match the key term.

This will easily align to/from/with the goals of the company.

Would they adhere with/to/on these measures if asked?

It will slightly/gradually/tentatively accumulate over time.

Answers: A advocate, acquire, adhere **B** advent, adjustment, advanced, acquired **C** align with, adhere to, gradually accumulate

20

trait transition underlying undertake undoubtedly unified utilize variance verify viable

First stage: Introducing the terms

undoubtedly adv
ʌnˈdaʊ·ţɪd·liˈ
certainly, definitely, unquestionably

undertake verb
·ˌʌn.dəˈteɪ.k
to attempt or commit to do something

transition noun
trænˈzɪʃ.ən
change or movement from one stage or state; the period of time for this change

verify verb
ˈver.ɪ.faɪ
to confirm; to prove the truth of; to check or determine something through examination

trait noun
treɪt
a distinguishing characteristic or quality

Effective leaders **undoubtedly** have similar **traits**, allowing them to make the **transition** from being a general worker to **undertaking** managerial duties. This lack of **variance** between the subjects **verified** Lam's theory, as it revealed that there is an **underlying** determination and resolve in all managers. We view this theory as the most **viable** for our study and therefore will **utilize** it to pursue our aim of developing a **unified** theory of leadership style.

variance noun
ˈveə.ri.əns
difference or divergence; conflicting

viable adj
vaɪ.ə.bəl
workable, practicable; capable of existing or happening

utilize (BE: utilise) verb
ˈjuː.təl.aɪz
to put to use; to make practical use of

underlying adj
ˌʌn.dəˈlaɪ.ɪŋ
fundamental or basic; implicit; hidden but detectable

unified adj
ˈjuːnɪfaɪd
formed into a whole; made into one

First check

A Circle the nouns in this list.

utilize verify viable trait variance

B Select a word from the ten key terms to match each definition.

to determine something _____

to make use of _____

definitely _____

made into one _____

C Underline the terms that are misspelled in this extract.

The transition from three different schemes to a unifed scheme is likely to take some time. Undoubtebly, training will have to be undertaken for those employees who either utilse the booking system or verify the client details.

Second stage: Collocations and usage

Trait is a countable noun.

Better than feature, manner

A company should execute a tactic that makes use of the traits of the firm.

Trait is often used in conjunction with the following verbs: 'share', 'lack', 'possess', 'acquire', 'develop', 'identify', and 'recognize'.

The system identified traits that were suitable for the role.

It was a trait I recognized in all of the participants.

Trait is also modified by the following adjectives: 'distinctive', 'negative', 'necessary', and 'dominant'.

Luxury brands are afraid of brand demise and losing their necessary traits, that of 'exclusivity' and 'uniqueness'.

Answers: **A** trait, variance **B** verify, utilize, undoubtedly, unified
C ~~unifed~~ / unified, ~~undoubtebly~~ / undoubtedly, ~~utilse~~ / utilize

Usage notes: A trait tends to be inherited or passed down in people, whereas character is generally said to be influenced by association and the environment. Traits can apply equally to objects and entities as they can to people, as demonstrated in the first and final examples above.

Transition is a countable and an uncountable noun. It has a related verb form, **transition**.

Better than change, move, shift

They demonstrated this transition to a more business-minded model.

Something or someone tends to 'make', 'complete', or 'undergo' a transition.

The next stage is for them to make the difficult transition from adolescent to adult.

Adjectives that can modify transition include 'sudden', 'gradual', 'phased', 'smooth', and 'direct'.

Some are now criticizing the fact there is this sudden transition to mixed-ability teaching.

Transition takes the following prepositions: 'in', 'into', 'from', and 'to'.

The transition into or out of special education is one such example.

Usage notes: The verb form has the same meaning as the noun but is less common (. . . *as they transition into adulthood*.)

Underlying is an adjective that can be used directly before a noun to modify it (*underlying reasons*) or with a linking verb (*remain underlying*). It is the present participle of the verb **underlie**.

Better than main, basic, causing

The underlying causes of employee behaviour will be investigated according to service performance.

Underlying tends to modify the nouns 'cause', 'condition', 'issue', 'message', 'motive', and 'risk'.

This type of research aims to uncover the underlying motives and desires.

This activity had the underlying message of staying in control and on top of things.

Usage notes: Underlying should not be split into two parts ('*under lying these systems*'). The verb 'underlie' from which the adjective derives (as its present participle) is an irregular verb, the simple past form being 'underlay' and the past participle 'underlain'.

Undertake is an irregular verb. Its past participle is **undertaken** and present participle is **undertaking**.

Better than carry out, start, take on

A pilot study was undertaken to ensure that the themes were adequate for the research.

Often a person or organization undertakes 'training', 'assessment', 'fieldwork', 'a review' or 'a journey'.

The worker will undertake training and then assessment to determine suitability for the senior level.

Usage notes: Sometimes 'do' and 'did' can sound inelegant (*We did research / They did fieldwork*). Opt for alternatives such as 'carry out', 'conduct', and 'undertake' instead. Usually the verb is used passively as in the first example (*was undertaken*) and is slightly less flexible than the phrasal 'carry out'. Note also the form of the simple past tense, 'undertook'.

Undoubtedly is an adverb that tends to come before the term it is modifying. It can also be employed as a sentence adverb (see 24) at the start of a sentence (*Undoubtedly, this has proven difficult for most participants*).

Better than indeed, definitely, absolutely

Tourism has undoubtedly played a significant role in Australia's economy.

Undoubtedly tends to modify the verbs 'require', 'exist', 'alter', and 'affect'.

The officers will undoubtedly require further information once they have reached the location.

Usage notes: This adverb should be used sparingly, as it is prone to overuse. 'Clearly' and certainly' are useful alternatives. Because undoubtedly is an emphatic term, hedging (modal) terms such as 'might' or 'could' are inappropriate.

Undoubtedly, this ~~might lead to~~ . . . *Undoubtedly, this will lead to . . .*

Unified is an adjective that can be used directly before a noun to modify it (*unified system*) or after a linking verb (*become unified*). It is the past participle of the verb **unify**. A related noun form is **unifier**.

Better than joined, combined

They introduced a unified approach by combining stock and flow.

Unified often modifies the nouns 'model', 'theory', 'system', 'view', 'form', and 'message'.

There is no unified theory of all the fundamental forces recognized by physics.

Utilize is a regular verb. Its past participle is **utilized** and present participle is **utilizing**. It has a related noun form, **utilization**.

Better than use, make the most of

It rests on the policymaker's ability to fully utilize the research findings.

Utilize tends to be used with the nouns 'system', 'method', 'technology', 'data', 'strengths', and 'ability'.

Distance learning courses in the department utilize this technology the most.

They are not able to utilize their strengths under these conditions.

It is modified by the adverbs 'effectively' and 'fully'.

The next question related to whether they could fully utilize this system.

Usage notes: Utilize can act as a direct substitute for 'use' and is a good choice for scientific writing to get across the point of making the most of a situation. Other times it can sound as though the writer is trying too hard to be academic (*The participants were allowed to utilize a pen for the second task*). 'Use' is perfectly acceptable in most situations, especially commonplace ones.

Variance is a countable and an uncountable noun.

Better than difference, change, disagreement

This efficient international portfolio should minimize variance for a given rate of return.

Variance tends to be 'explained', 'measured', and 'accounted for'.

This accounted for around 15% of the variance in the accuracy factor.

Usage notes: The phrase 'at variance with' can also be used to mean opposing or in disagreement with (*These hasty conclusions were at variance with their usual cautious approach*).

Verify is a regular verb. Its past participle is **verified** and present participle is **verifying**. It has related noun forms, **verification** and **verifier**, and a related adjective form, **verifiable**.

Better than prove, show

In their investigation, they were able to verify that innovation has a considerable influence on growth.

Verify is often used with the nouns 'data', 'information', 'findings', 'report', and 'accuracy'.

Relevant published documents will be used to crosscheck the information and verify the data.

Three sets were sent to the corresponding participants to verify the accuracy of the transcription.

Usage notes: 'Verify' implies that an investigation needs to be carried out to find the truth or to show that something is correct. 'Confirm' is normally employed when something just needs acknowledgment and when the fact has been largely established.

We just need the teacher to confirm this is true.

Viable is an adjective that can be used directly before a noun to modify it (*viable measure*) or after a linking verb (*prove viable*). It has a related noun form, **viability**, and a related adverb form, **viably**.

Better than able to do, workable, possible

They were concerned that this strategy might not be viable in larger classes.

Viable is often used with the terms 'prove', 'remain', and 'no longer'.

The strategy of keeping China disengaged from Russia was no longer viable.

Adverbs used with the adjective include 'commercially', 'economically', and 'financially'.

Their policies were now motivated by political or sociological reasons rather than by the desire to form economically viable partnerships as in previous years.

Usage notes: Viable and feasible (see 10) are similar in meaning, but a distinction can be made. Feasible is looking at whether something can be carried out, and viable relates to whether something can be successful or sustainable. Doing something might be feasible, but it may not be viable.

Working with these small businesses for longer than a few weeks is not a viable option for the company.

Within this timeframe, the project is not feasible in its current form.

Second check

A Which of the ten key terms do these synonyms relate to?

feature, quality _____

to use, apply _____

change, difference _____

a move, a switch _____

B Replace the struck-through word with a word from the ten available.

We are interested in the principles ~~*causing*~~ _____ this social movement.

Fortunately, they were able to make the ~~*change*~~ _____ from supporting individual clients to dealing with all of the corporate accounts.

Project B is a ~~*possible*~~ _____ alternative if the backers pull out of Project A.

The plan is to ~~*do*~~ _____ this testing in April.

C Select an appropriate option to match the key term.

This largely accounts [to/from/for] the variance seen in Figure 4.23.

The transition [with/to/in] an intermediate player is complex.

Is this really the most [financially/finance/financial] viable option?

Answers: **A** trait, utilize, variance, transition **B** underlying, transition, viable, undertake **C** accounts for, transition to, financially viable

Final Check for the Top 200

Replace the word in grey with one from the top 200 (see the hints at the end for a possible solution to each one).

It is now important to **sketch** _____ **(A)** the method by which the second observation will be carried out. To **boost** _____ **(B)** our understanding of the processes involved, we **at the start** _____ **(C) gave** _____ **(D)** fifteen minutes for the practical task and then ten minutes for the participants to **have a think** _____ **(E)** on the solutions that **came out** _____ **(F)**. Three additional staff members were employed to **help** _____ **(G)** the **shift** _____ **(H)** from practice to reflection—as this proved **tricky** _____ **(I)** during the first observation. **All of them being the same** _____ **(J)** was considered important when structuring the observation reports; to **get** _____ **(K)** a uniform arrangement, the facilitators worked on the documents **all as one** _____ **(L)** the following day. The **more** _____**(M)** number of observations as the tasks progressed was in stark contrast to the **small** _____ **(N)** findings that arose from the pilot study.

The **habit** _____ **(O)** for the groups to dismiss the reflection stage as needless **ended** _____ **(P)** in weak scores in the first test and bore **likeness** _____ **(Q)** with the study and the findings of Chang (2015). Chang is currently working towards **getting** _____ **(R)** an understanding of reflective learning; his research **for the most part** _____ **(S)** involves trying to **see** _____ **(T)** the direction that reflective study takes when carried out in groups.

Hints

A) See Chapter 14
B) See Chapter 9
C) See Chapter 12
D) See Chapter 2
E) See Chapter 17
F) See Chapter 8
G) See Chapter 10
H) See Chapter 20
I) See Chapter 16
J) See Chapter 5
K) See Chapter 1
L) See Chapter 4
M) See Chapter 11
N) See Chapter 13
O) See Chapter 19
P) See Chapter 6
Q) See Chapter 18
R) See Chapter 3
S) See Chapter 15
T) See Chapter 7

Possible answers

It is now important to **outline** the method by which the second observation will be carried out. To **enhance** our understanding of the processes involved, we **initially allocated** fifteen minutes for the practical task and then ten minutes for the participants to **reflect** on the solutions that **emerged**. Three additional staff members were employed to **facilitate** the **transition** from practice to reflection—as this proved **problematic** during the first observation. **Consistency** was considered important when structuring the observation reports; to **accomplish** a uniform arrangement, the facilitators worked on the documents **collectively** the following day. The **growing** number of observations as the tasks progressed was in stark contrast to the **minimal** findings that arose from the pilot study.

The **tendency** for the groups to dismiss the reflection stage as needless **culminated** in weak scores in the first test and bore **similarity** with the study and the findings of Chang (2015). Chang is currently working towards **attaining** an understanding of reflective learning; his research **predominantly** involves trying to **discern** the direction that reflective study takes when carried out in groups.

PART B

Academic Word Categories

Words that will prove useful for creating effective academic English are presented in this second part of the book. The terms are grouped by type, meaning, and setting to ensure that they can be easily absorbed and then employed when writing an essay or paper. They are explored through commentaries, semantic lists, definitions, synonyms, collocations or explanations, to differentiate them in the clearest way possible.

21 NOUNS: Action nouns

Although verbs are the obvious choice for expressing action and creating coherent and dynamic writing, concept nouns still feature heavily in academic texts. The particular nouns that follow all relate to action and tend to be employed just as often as their associated verb forms. The emphasis for these first few nouns is on the verbs they form a relationship with.

Nouns of action that are usually 'made'

Researchers and analysts 'make' *projections* about how they see things developing; these will usually be revised at some point. If there is some doubt, or the prediction relates to data or dates, then *approximations* are 'made'. Approximations can also be given and provided, representing *generalizations*. If your predictions are too specific, then *adjustments* (see 1) will be necessary. And if things are not going according to plan, this will lead to *reassessments*, which may be 'required', 'caused' or 'forced'. A *stipulation* is 'made' if you want something included or something addressed. If you are really not happy (usually about someone), you might even 'make' an *accusation*. With *speculation* (see 18) you can 'encourage,' 'invite', or 'increase' it, or if necessary 'end' or 'dismiss' it—an action or situation may also 'give rise to' it.

■ **EXAMPLES**

stipulation: *This was a written stipulation made to cover the issues no longer in dispute.*

accusation: *It began with the student making an accusation about the lack of direct teaching.*

approximation: *The figure is just an approximation we had to give for the initial report.*

More nouns of action

A *consultation* is something you 'have' or you 'hold', often in the health sciences and within the realms of business. *Clarification* can be 'sought', 'called for', or 'required'. You can also 'give' someone or 'provide' someone with clarification if he or she does not quite understand or you have not been clear enough. An *endorsement* is 'given to' something or 'received from' someone. *Reflections* are usually 'about' something or 'on' something, especially on your work, which you 'give' or 'provide' to the reader. These nouns are sometimes used generically, which means that the action is suggested or advised rather than specifically taking place.

■ **EXAMPLES**

endorsement: *An endorsement received from a tutor can also increase their confidence.* (See also 9, 'endorse'.)

clarification: *Questions 3 and 5 required clarification, as there was some confusion with the wording.*

reflection: *Such reflections are simplified into concepts, which in turn serve as the premise for new conclusions.* (See also 17, 'reflect'.)

Nouns that tend to be used in a generic way

The nouns that follow are likely to be used as concepts and therefore likely to have an uncountable sense.

articulation: *This was designed to support the articulation between research and policy process.*

> **Usage notes:** This noun is used for both expressing the importance of communicating effectively (*Articulation of these ideas is necessary from the outset*), and for the shape or manner in which things come together (*The articulation of these groups can take place naturally over time*).

authentication: *The first task is to analyse the authentication procedure that the bank employs.*

> **Usage notes:** Authentication is often found in the field of computer and communication systems and when discussing security. In these scenarios, it refers to establishing whether a person or an action is genuine, as does the verb form 'authenticate'. The verb may also be used when determining whether historical sources are 'authentic' (see 3); for this meaning though, another related noun, 'authenticity', is more likely to be employed than 'authentication'.

categorization: *Most developers would recommend starting with a categorization of the components that are likely to feature.*

Usage notes: Employed less than its associated verb 'to categorize', categorization is normally used when revealing the different stages of a process and the level to which something has been organized (*The level of categorization has also been reduced in this study*). It is used with the prefixes 'de-' and 'mis-' to show a reduction and an error in categorization respectively.

coordination: *The links were built to promote communication and coordination.*

Usage notes: See 6, 'coordinate'.

determination: *The training is designed to test whether they have sufficient determination.*

Usage notes: This noun is mainly used to demonstrate a desire and willingness to do something or see something through (*This determination bodes well for the future*). When used for this purpose it is linked to the adjective 'determined', not the verb 'to determine' (see 7, 'determine'). But it can be used in the same way as the verb for working something out or producing an outcome (*Determination of the width and height must also be included*).

eradication: *Improvement in this area can only take place after the eradication of rural poverty.*

Usage notes: The noun and the associated verb form 'to eradicate' are employed when discussing removing or eliminating detrimental things such as poverty and disease. Avoid using them for when you are simply taking out a feature or a variable from your work and getting rid of mistakes. These terms are too strong for those situations. Opt for 'eliminate' or 'remove' instead.

Eradication of these diseases was the primary objective at this time.

Stage two involved eliminating any errors that had occurred in the first stage.

extraction: *A later chapter will cover the extraction of bacterial DNA.*

Usage notes: This noun is used in the health and biological sciences, geology, engineering, and when removing unwanted data or separating data to see the trends and patterns (*Factor analysis can result in the extraction of one meaningful factor*). It is also commonly used like an adjective to modify another noun (*The extraction method has been taken from Heinz and Deng (1976)*).

formulation: *This is the reason that question formulation is so important when interviewing these learners.*

Usage notes: Although the verb form is commonly employed (see 10, 'formulate'), the noun is used to emphasize the concept or process of creating something by careful planning or thought—usually ideas, principles, laws, and data (*The three focus group sessions led to the formulation of this idea*).

improvisation: *The company built a reputation with their innovation and improvisation.*

Usage notes: As with most noun-verb combinations, the noun 'improvisation' is usually employed generically or conceptually (*The managers also encourage improvisation from their staff during these periods*) and the verb used for an actual instance (*Group 2 improvised on this task and achieved the highest score*).

internalization: *This study investigates the internalization of three types of motivation.*

Usage notes: Primarily used in psychology for the learning of values and attitudes, internalization is preferred to the verb 'to internalize' when emphasizing the concept rather than a specific act.

visualization: *Animation plays an important role in story visualization.*

Usage notes: The noun is commonly found in texts relating to motivational studies and therapy, often modifying another noun (*The visualization techniques proved quite effective*). The verb 'to visualize' has a broader function and can be employed in many areas of study (*Morgan (1963) visualized a smaller product that targeted a wider population*).

People nouns

This next unofficial category of nouns is often overlooked, but the terms appear quite frequently in academic writing. These nouns either state the role that someone has in an official capacity or plays in a certain scenario, or they label a person based on his or her general worldview or stance on a particular subject. Most of them have verb and/or adjective forms.

Nouns that indicate someone's view or specific belief in something

Supporting or following a particular system or a particular cause means you are an *adherent* of it. Arguing in favour, being the first person to do it, and proposing

something are the actions of a *proponent*. An *exponent* tends to explain or use an already accepted idea or emphasize something. *Advocates* publically support or recommend a system or method.

■ **EXAMPLES**

adherent: *Adherents of the previous system welcomed the news.*

proponent: *As a proponent of Kant's federalism, they deemed the EU as still preserving the sovereignty of its states.* (See also 16 'proponent'.)

exponent: *He was an early exponent of the technique and was responsible for its subsequent popularity.*

advocate: *Many of the respondents were advocates of government intervention.* (See also 1, 'advocate'.)

Nouns that indicate someone's rejection of or opposition to something

Opponents of particular theories or schemes are *dissenters* if they oppose the standard beliefs or common societal ideas; they are *skeptics* if they simply doubt or question the normal way. *Detractors* criticize someone, often in an unfair or unconstructive manner.

■ **EXAMPLES**

dissenter: *At the time, dissenters would have been punished for their views.*

skeptic: *There were a number of skeptics who doubted whether this could be achieved in the timeframe available.*

detractor: *Despite having his detractors, the manager implemented these changes single-handedly and with little subsequent impact on operations.*

Nouns that state someone's temperament or general beliefs

(an) empiricist: *This is where the empiricists differ from the realists discussed in Chapter 3.*

Definition: someone who believes that experience is the only source of knowledge.

Usage notes: The word has an identical adjective form (*The section begins with an introduction to the empiricist method*).

(an) introvert: *Clearly, it was the work of an introvert who had explored these latent meanings.*

Definition: someone who relates to and is concerned with thoughts and feelings rather than social situations; inwardly involved rather than outwardly expressive

(a) moderate: *It was actually a moderate, Kim Hunt, who appealed for parliament to reform.*

Definition: someone who holds balanced and reserved views and is opposed to any extreme thinking

Usage notes: The noun is pronounced the same as the adjective but differently from the verb 'to moderate'.

noun and adjective, ˈmɒd.ər.ət; verb, ˈmɒd.ər.eɪt

(a) pragmatist: *Much of the success can be attributed to the minister being a pragmatist who understood this balance.*

Definition: someone who takes a practical approach to problems and can adapt to situations in order to be successful

Usage notes: A pragmatist will show pragmatism (noun) and be pragmatic (adjective) in approach and behaviour.

(a) rationalist: *Well-known author and rationalist Ravi Singh is the subject of their second article.*

Definition: someone who is concerned with facts that are observable; relying on reason rather than intuition

Usage notes: The identical adjective is commonly used (*Rationalist theories of organization are prominent in the text*).

(a) visionary: *It required the mind of a visionary for the industry to progress.*

Definition: someone with keen foresight and who is innovative; occasionally, someone who is idealistic but perhaps unrealistic

Nouns that detail the role that someone has officially or plays in a certain scenario

These first seven nouns are used to label roles played by people in a specific situation or scenario:

adversary: *The best defence is to attack an adversary's information source.*

Definition: an opponent or an enemy

arbiter: *It seemed that the manager was not able to effectively carry out the role of arbiter in these matters.*

Definition: someone empowered to judge something; someone having complete control over an activity or situation

beneficiary: *The sole beneficiary of this policy was the homeowner.*

Definition: someone who receives or gains a benefit from a situation

Usage notes: 'Recipient' can be used here, but the term also relates to being given or receiving something bad or negative. Beneficiary is always positive so is suitable when someone gains from an action.

custodian: *Initially, consent had to be gained from the custodian of the land.*

Definition: someone who takes care of something; a guardian or keeper

intermediary: *In fact, intermediaries facilitate money-laundering practices between banks and non-financial institutions.*

Definition: someone who acts as a negotiator to help resolve differences between two parties (also a 'mediator') or to aid their activities.

interlocutor: *I tried to make it clear to my interlocutor that I was ready to be earnest and receptive to all questions.*

Definition: a conversation partner or someone who asks the questions in a conversation

protagonist: *The protagonist should ideally be sympathetic in this genre to create a connection with the audience.*

Definition: a principal or leading figure (usually in a book or a play/film); a supporter of a cause

Usage notes: The former definition is more common than the latter, where adherent is more likely to be employed. It is unnecessary to write 'main' protagonist.

* * *

This next set of nouns is for roles played by people in an organization or during an event, usually in an official capacity.

collaborator: *An example of each was sent for further analysis to our collaborator, Dr L. Yang.*

Definition: someone who works with someone else on a joint project

facilitator: *The English tutor was regarded as a key facilitator for student–teacher reflection.*

Definition: someone who assists to make something easier either in a leading or a supporting role

operative: *Ten years ago the factory had only human operatives, but now they embrace computerized systems.*

Definition: a worker, usually with a particular skill; an industry worker who handles a particular piece of equipment

Usage notes: This definition is primarily British English. North American usage would consider an operative to be a government/private agent.

practitioner: *The questionnaire was distributed to medical practitioners from three of the trusts.*

Definition: someone engaged in a profession or who teaches a technique

subordinate: *In this instance, one of the subordinates would be tasked with contacting the client.*

Definition: Someone who is below another in rank; an assistant

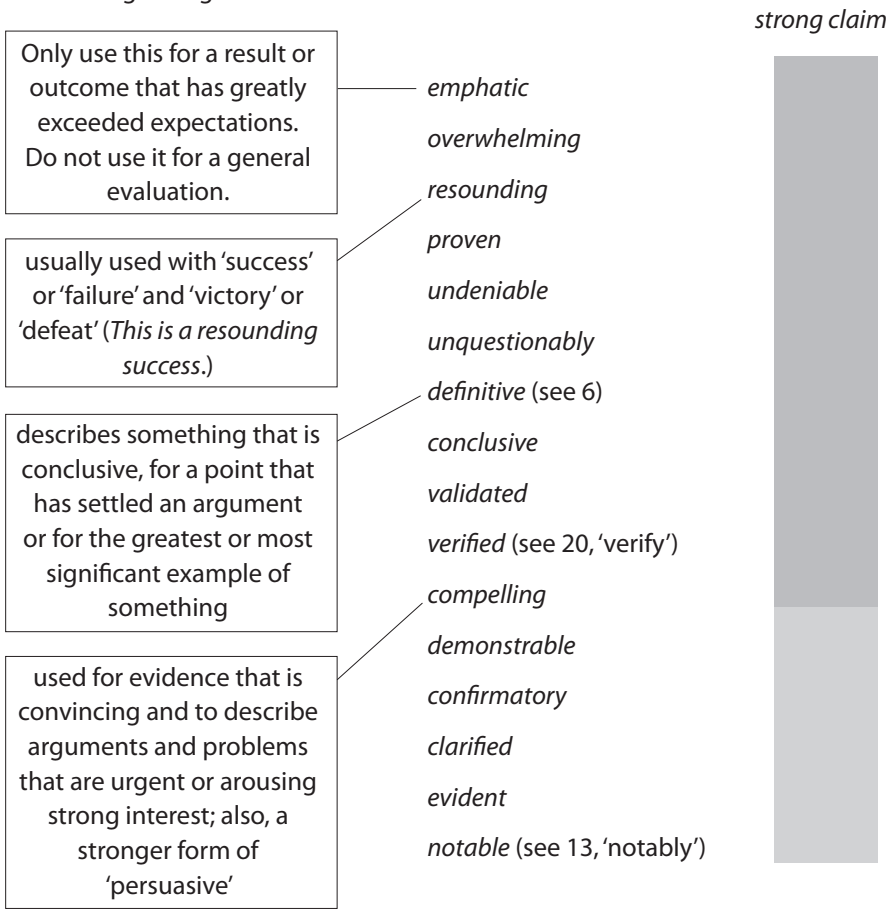
Ten more nouns of interest

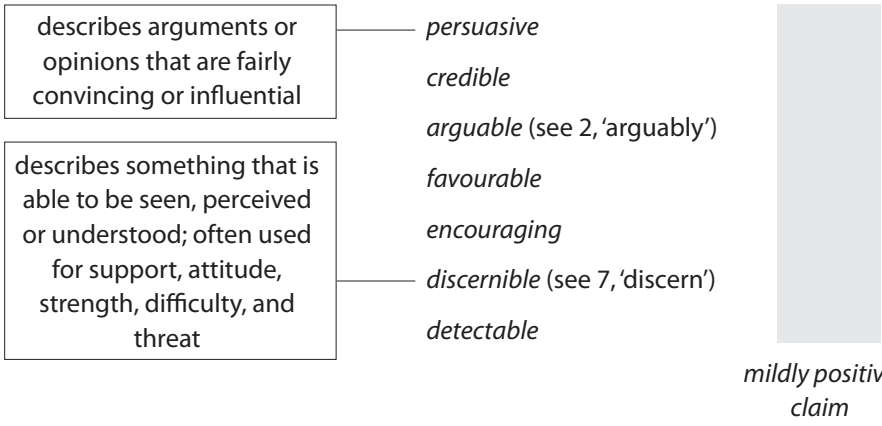
Here are ten more effective nouns that have been chosen for their usefulness and the frequency with which they occur in academic writing. Conduct your own research on these by obtaining a definition, locating some examples of usage, and then employing them in your writing!

calibre
countermeasure
facet
gravity
locus
niche
outlet
precursor
resourcefulness
vigour

32 WORDS for reviewing and concluding

Assessing evidence in your literature review (such as evaluating older and current research on the topic) and in the discussion and conclusion sections (such as evaluating your own results or contribution) is one of the main components of written research. The scale below illustrates terms that express a positive evaluation, with diminishing strength of claim.





When justifying the research carried out or the results achieved

A successful study can *enhance* or *enrich* a subject and may gain *merit* from peers within the field. Your research could prove to be *useful* or *influential*. There may be some valuable *insights* or *innovative* designs produced that demonstrate *originality* and that can be *viably* reproduced or put into practice. A successful outcome *justifies* the research taking place and the effort put in. It also *vindicates* your choice of topic and the method employed.

■ **EXAMPLES**

enhance: See 9.

enrich: *This study has enriched the literature by using more recent data. It has also considered the application of several passive portfolio policies.*

insight: See 12.

vindicate: *The findings vindicated the decision to focus only on companies based on the peninsula.*

When expressing a negative evaluation or outcome

Sometimes a research study does not go according to plan or achieve the results anticipated. The reader is then likely to encounter the adverb *admittedly*.

The evidence may have been inadequate (*flawed*) or limited (*insufficient*), in which case it could be *discredited* or *disproved*. With unreliable evidence, the conclusions formed would be *tentative* or even *spurious*.

The research may have encountered *unanticipated* problems or had its shortcomings (*deficiencies*) exposed. Perhaps you or a researcher neglected or *overlooked* something (an *oversight*) or *miscalculated* the time it would take or an

amount, or even *misinterpreted* the arguments or the data. There may have been unforeseen problems (*impediments*) or *drawbacks* that could not be overcome. Was something explored only *partially* or perhaps *omitted* (see 14) by mistake?

Evidently, the study was never going to succeed, and these *shortfalls* may be *attributable* to the fact that the process was *inhibited* by *unattainable* information or data, *restrictions* in time and ability, or *discrepancies* (see 8) between findings—or within the data extracted.

■ **EXAMPLES**

admittedly: *Admittedly, as the traditional products are still bestsellers they should have been emphasized.*

insufficient: *The second institution also provided insufficient data and therefore satisfactory conclusions could not be drawn.*

unanticipated: *There were some unanticipated challenges relating to the fieldwork.*

deficiencies: *Despite the above deficiencies, this study has provided some guidelines for pedagogical practice.*

oversight: *It was certainly an oversight not to have asked the patients for their views.*

drawbacks: *One of the major drawbacks was that there was nobody observing the second classroom.*

evidently: *Evidently, more time should have been set aside for this to be carried out.*

Future research

Once an evaluation of the study has been made and the limitations have been addressed, there is usually a small section dedicated to future research. Here you can offer guidance and suggestions to researchers about the areas to concentrate on or move into, perhaps building on your own study. Word selection is often dictated by the level of success or effectiveness you perceived your study to have achieved.

When the study has a positive outcome or there is optimism for studies of this nature in the future

You may be *encouraged* by the outcome of your study. The research may have set a *template* and therefore made it *reproducible*, which means that future researchers can *replicate* your positive results if they choose to carry out the study again.

This is known as *repeatability*. Perhaps the research needs just a little *fine-tuning* or a minor *adjustment* (see 1) to make it *viable*. Sometimes the *refinement* of one aspect will produce the results you were looking to *attain*. If a further change has to be made, then a *readjustment* would be advised as long as that change is *feasible* and a result *obtainable*. Any positive result, no matter how small, *augurs* well for the future and for continued progression in the field.

If the study was less successful and had a disappointing outcome

Sometimes research and experiments do not go as planned or the results are not as expected. You may *ponder* or *reflect* on what went wrong and identify something that was *neglected*. *Hindsight* is a wonderful thing! Future researchers may need to be *mindful* or *realistic*. You may even provide several *caveats*, informing them of the need to make certain changes that you perceived as undermining the current study. *Amendments* (see 2) will have to be made. Perhaps a *re-interpretation* of an area is required. You could even suggest a complete *re-evaluation* or *reassessment* of the topic or design. This is also known as a *rethink*. Whatever the feeling is, it is always good to finish on a positive note and that, with *perseverance*, a future researcher will *prevail* if he or she heeds your advice.

■ **EXAMPLES**

reproducible: *Our model is clearly reproducible and can be used to study a wide range of experimental conditions.*

replicate: See 17.

viable: See 20.

attain: See 3.

feasible: See 10.

obtainable: *We have shown that positive results are obtainable if the correct procedure is followed.*

reflect: See 17.

mindful: *Future researchers need to be mindful of the strong cultural differences.*

caveat: *However, some caveats should be provided for future studies that focus on the local impact.*

reinterpretation: *Reinterpretation of the key actors could provide a better approach to understanding environmental protection in this area.*

About the author

Steve Hart has been editing and proofreading for international academics and graduate students since 2005. He is the author of *English Exposed: Common Mistakes Made by Chinese Speakers*, has co-authored undergraduate English textbooks for the Indian market and written two practical grammar guides for university students. He is currently an academic coordinator and dissertation supervisor at a higher education institution in Cambridge, England.

Index: Top 200 by part of speech

The entries of the following index indicate the chapters in which the top 200 terms can be found, organized by part of speech.

Verbs

accomplish 1
accumulate 1
acquire 1
adhere 1
advocate 1
align 1
allege 2
alleviate 2
allocate 2
articulate 3
assert 3
assign 3
attain 3
attribute 3
clarify 4
coincide 4
compile 4
consolidate 5
constitute 5
contend 5
convey 6
coordinate 6
correspond 6
culminate 6
demonstrate 7
denote 7
derive 7
designate 7
determine 7
differentiate 7
discern 7
disclose 7
elaborate 8
elicit 8
embody 8
emerge 8
encompass 8
endorse 9
enhance 9
enlist 9
entail 9
envision 9
equip 9
establish
exemplify 9
facilitate 10
formulate 10
frame 10
gauge 10
generate 10
hypothesize 11
implement 11
incorporate 11
infer 12
integrate 12
intensify 12
interpret 12
manifest 13
maximize 13
modify 13
monitor 13
object 14
offset 14
omit 14
outline 14
oversee 14
portray 15
precede 15
preclude 15
probe 16
recall 16
refine 17
reflect 17
reinforce 17
replicate 17
resolve 17
signify 18
situate 18
specialize 18
symbolize 19
undertake 20
utilize 20
verify 20

Adverbs

actively 1
arguably 2
collectively 4
inevitably 11
initially 12
notably 13
predominantly 15
primarily 16
relatively 17
reportedly 17
routinely 18
steadily 18
subsequently 19
sufficiently 19
undoubtedly 20

Adjectives

advanced 1
apparent 2
applicable 2
arbitrary 2
authentic 3
beneficial 3
characteristic 3
coherent 4
comparable 4
comprehensive 4
conflicting 4
considerable 5
constituent 5
contemporary 5
contradictory 5
conventional 6
cumulative 6
decisive 6
definitive 6
desirable 7
discrete 8
equivalent 9
explicit 9
extensive 10
feasible 10
functional 10
fundamental 10
growing 11
guiding 11
hypothetical 11
imperative 11
implicit 11
informed 12
inherent 12
instrumental 12
integral 12
intrinsic 13
marginal 13
minimal 13
normative 13
optimal 14
partial 14
persistent 15
pervasive 15
plausible 15
preliminary 15
prevalent 15
problematic 16
prominent 16
prone 16
prospective 16
renewed 17
respective 17
robust 18
salient 18
subjective 19
substantial 19
susceptible 19
systematic 19
theoretical 19
underlying 20
unified 20
viable 20

Nouns

adjustment 1
advent 1
ambiguity 2
amendment 2
apparatus 2
assumption 3
capability 3
complexity 4
conception 4
consistency 5
constraint 5
continuity 5
contributor 6
correlation 6
depiction 7
discourse 8
discrepancy 8
disparity 8
distinction 8
exploration 10
implication 11
insight 12
magnitude 13
notion 14
paradox 14
perception 14
premise 15
proponent 16
proximity 16
recognition 16
reliance 17
similarity 18
speculation 18
standing 18
suitability 19
tendency 19
trait 20
transition 20
variance 20

General index

This index has been deliberately designed so that only chapter numbers are given. Searching for the relevant entry within chapters will help to create links between the terms.

advent – top 200 term
adversary – general term
3 (attain) – see usage notes of entry in Ch. 3

1 – top 200 entry
1 – general reference
A – Appendix

abate 2
ability A
abnormality 30
accelerated 27
accepted 26
accessible 23
acclaimed 29
accomplish 1
accord 25
accruing 28
accumulating 28
accumulate 1, 4 (compile)
accuracy A
accusation 21
achieve 1
acknowledged 26, 29
acquire 1, 3 (attain)
action A
actively 1
activity A
adhere 1, 21
adherent 21
adjoined 25
adjustment 1, 13 (modify), 21, 32
admittedly 24, 32
advanced 1, 23
advent 1
adversary 21
adverse 23
advocate 1, 21
affinity 25
affirm 22, 26
age A
agenda 29, 31
agreement A
aim A
align 1
aligning 25
allege 2, 22, 26, 31
allegedly 17, 24
alleviate 2
alliance 25
allocate 2
allude 22
alter 13
alteration 1, 27
alternatively 24
amalgamation 25
amassed 28
ambiguity 2, 26
ambivalent 31
amendment 1 (adjustment), **2**, 32
amount A
ample 23, 28
analysis A
anecdotal 26
animated 31
annexed 25
annotate 30
anomalies 30
answer A
anticipate 22
apex 30
apparatus 2
apparent 2
apparently 17
append 30
appended 25
applicable 2

appreciable 27, 28
apprehensive 31
approach A
approaches A
appropriate 23
approval A
approximations 21
arbiter 21
arbitrary 2
areas A
arguable 2, 32
arguably 2, 26, 32
argument A
array 28
articulate 3, 31
articulation 21
ascertain 22
aspiration 29
aspire 22
assemble 4
assert 3, 22, 26, 29
assertion 29
assessment A
assets A
assign 3, 27
assimilate 22, 25
associated 25
assuage 2
assume 22, 26
assumption 3, 19 (theoretical), 26, 29, A
asynchronous 30
attain 3, 32
attest 22, 26
attributable 32
attribute 3, 22
augment 27
augmenting 28
augur 32
authentic 3, 21
authenticate 3, 22
authentication 3, 21
automatically 24
awareness A
axiom 26

backdrop 29
base A
behaviour A
beliefs A
believe 22
beneficial 3
beneficiary 21
benefit A
benefits A
bias A
binomial 30
bivariate 30
blended 25
broad 28

call A
capability 3, 27
capable 23
capture 22
cases A
categories A
categorization 21
cause A
caution 26
cautionary 26
cautious 31
caveat 32
certainty 26
chance A
chances A
change 13, A
changes A
characteristic 3
characteristics A
choice A
chronologically 24
circumspect 31
circumstantial 26
clarification 21, 31
clarified 32
clarify 4
clients A
cluster 30
coalescence 25
codes A
coherent 4
cohesive 30
cohort A
coincide 4
collaborate 25
collaborator 21
collective 25
collectively 4
commitment A
commonality 25
comparable 4
comparatively 24
compatibility 25
compatible 23
compelling 23, 32
competitive 23
compile 4
complementary 25
complexity 4
compliant 25
complying 25
component A
components 29
comprehend 31
comprehension A
comprehensive 4, 28
computational 30
concept 4
conception 4, 29
concepts A
conclusion A
conclusive 26, 32
concomitant 25
concordance 25
concur 25
concurrent 23
concurrent 30
condition A
conditional 30
conditions A
confines 5
confirm 20
confirmation 26
confirmatory 32
confirmed 26
conflict A
conflicting 4, 25
conform 25
conjecture 22, 26
connected 30

connectedness 25
consecutive 23
consensus A
consent A
consequently 19
considerable 5, 28
consideration 29
consistency 5
consolidate 5
constancy 27
constant 30
constituent 5
constitute 5
constraining 23
constraint 5
constructive 23
consultation 21
contemporary 5
contend 5, 22, 26
contention 26
continual 23
continuity 5
contradictory 5
contribution A
contributor 6
control A
conventional 6
convergence 25
converging 25
conversely 24
convey 6
conviction 31
cooperative 31
coordinate 6, 21, 25
coordination 21
cornerstone 29
correlation 6, 30
correspond 6
correspondingly 24
corroborate 22
corroborated 26
cost A
counteract 22
countless 28
countries A
create 10
credence 26
credible 23, 31, 32
critically 24
critique 22
crucially 24
culminate 6
cumulative 6
curb 27
curtail 27
curvature 30
custodian 21
cyclical 30

damage A
damaging 23
danger A
data A
dearth 28
debate A
debated 26
deceptive 26
decisions A
decisive 6
declarative 31
declining 28
decrease A
decry 26
deduce 22, 26, 30
deepening 27, 29
deficiencies 32
definitive 6, 26, 32
definitively 26
degradation 27
degree A
deleterious 23
delineate 22
delve 22
demands A
demonstrable 32
demonstrate 7, 22, 26
demonstrated 26
denote 7
denounce 26
dependent 30
depiction 7
depleted 27, 28
deride 26
derive 7
design A
designate 7
desirable 7
detached 25
detectable 32
deterioration 27
determination 21
determine 7
deterministic 30
detractor 21
detrimental 23
development A
deviate 27
devoid 23
dialogue 31
dichotomous 30
dichotomy 25
dictum 26
difference A
differences A
differentiate 7
difficulties A
diffusion 25
diminished 27, 28
diminutive 28
discern 7, 27, 32
discernible 27, 32
disclose 7
discord 25
discordant 25
discourse 8
discredit 26
discredited 32
discreet 8
discrepancies 32
discrepancy 8, 32
discrete 8, 30
discussion A
disease A
disparate 25
disparity 8, 26, 30
dispel 26
disperse 25
dispersed 27
disproportionate 28
disprove 26
disproved 32

disputed 26
disregard 26
disrupting 23
dissect 22
dissenter 21
dissimilar 25
dissociation 25
distinct 23, 25, 30
distinction 8
distinctive 23
distinguish 22
distort 26, 27
divergence 25
diverging 25
diverse 25
diversify 25
doubtless 24
drawback 32
dyadic 30
dynamic 23

edit 27
effect A
effects A
efficiency A
effort A
efforts A
elaborate 8
elements A
elicit 8
eligible 31
elliptical 30
elucidate 22
elusive 23
embedded 25
embody 8
emerge 8
emergence 11
emerging 29
emotions A
emphatic 32
empirical 31
empiricist 21
empowering 23
encompass 8
encouraged 32
encouraging 32
endeavour 22
endlessly 24
endorse 9, 21
endorsement 21
enduring 23, 27
engaged 31
enhance 9, 23, 32
enhanced 23
enlist 9
enrich 27, 32
entail 9
envision 9
epistemology 30
equip 9
equivalent 9, 25
eradication 21
erroneous 26
error A
escalate 27
escalating 28, 29
establish 9
estimate 22
ethnographic 30
evaluation A
evasive 31
evidence A
evident 27, 32
evidently 24, 26, 32
evolve 27
example A
exceptional 23
excessive 28
exclude 14
exemplify 9
expand 27
expectation 29
experiences A
experiential 30
experimental 23, 30
explanation A
explanatory 30
explicit 9, 24, 31
explicitly 24
exploration 10
exploratory 30
exponent 21
exponential 28
expose 22
expound 22
express 6, 31
extemporizing 31
extended 10
extensive 10, 28
extent A
extraction 21
extreme 28

fabricate 26
facilitate 10
facilitator 21
factor A
facts A
failure A
falsify 26
fanciful 26
favourable 23, 32
feasible 10, 20 (viable) 29, 32
feature A
features A
feelings A
fields A
fieldwork A
figuration 30
figuratively 24
figure A
findings A
fine-tuning 32
flawed 26, 32
fluctuate 27
flux 27
focus A
forecast 22
foremost 29
form A
formalize 22
formalized 31
formally 24
formulate 10, 21
formulation 21
forthcoming 31
fragment 25
frame 10, 31
framed 31

framework A
frank 31
fraudulent 26
functional 10, 23
fundamental 10
funds A
fuse 25

gains A
gap A
gauge 10
generalizations 21
generalize 22
generate 10, 29
glean 22
goal A
grade A
graduated 27
grounded 29
growing 11, 28
growth A
guarded 31
guidance A
guidelines A
guiding 11, 31

habitually 24
heighten 27
heterogeneous 25
hindsight 32
hone 27
hybrid 25
hypothesize 11
hypothetical 11, 19 (theoretical), 26

idealized 26
ideas A
identifiable 30
identity A
imagine 9
immaterial 23
impact A
impediment 32
imperative 11
implausible 26
implement 11
implementation A
implication 11
implicit 11
imply 12, 22, 31
importance A
imprecise 26
improvement A
improvisation 21, 31
inaccuracy 26
inadequate 23, 28, 32
inadvertently 24
incidence A
incompatible 25
incomplete 14
inconclusive 26
incongruity 25
inconsequential 23
inconsistencies 5
incorporate 11, 25
incorporated 25
increase A
incremental 27
indeterminate 26
indirectly 24
indisputable 26
ineffective 23
inequality 30
inevitably 11, 24
infer 12, 22
influence A
influential 23, 32
informally 31
information A
informed 12
inherent 12, 13 (intrinsic)
inhibited 32
initially 12, 24
initiate 22
injury A
innovative 23, 32
innumerable 28
inseparable 25
inset 30
insight 12, 29, 31, 32
insightful 31
insignificant 28
insinuate 22
instruction A
instrumental 12
insufficient 23, 28, 32
integral 12
integrate 12
intensified 27
intensify 12
intention 29
interaction 31
interest A
interests A
interconnected 30
interdependent 30
intergroup 30
interlocutor 21
intermediary 21
intermittent 23
intermittently 24
internalization 21
interpret 12
inter-related 30
intersection 30
intertwined 25
intervention A
intonation 31
intrinsic 12 (inherent), **13**
introvert 21
invalid 26
invariably 24, 26
investigation A
involve 9
irreversible 27
issue A
issues A

journey A
judgement A
justify 32

knowledge A

layer A
learning A
legitimate 23
lens A
level A
levels A

liberal 28
lifestyle A
limitations A
limited 28
limiting 23
list A
lists A
location A
logic A
logically 24
loss A
losses A

magnitude 13, 28
maintain 27
mandatory 31
manifest 13
manifold 28
manipulate 27
manufactured 26
marginal 13, 28
marked 27
markets A
matters A
maxim 26
maximize 13
meaning A
meanings A
measure A
mediator 21
merit 32
message A
method A
methods A
midpoint 30
mind A
mindful 32
minimal 13, 23, 28
miscalculate 32
misconceived 29
misinterpret 32
model A
moderate 21, 27
modification 27
modify 13, 27
momentarily 24
monitor 13
motivation A
motivational 23
motive A
mounting 27
multivariate 30
mutual 25
mutually 3
myriad 28
myth A

nature A
need A
needs A
neglected 29, 32
negligible 28
nested 30
network A
nonlinear 30
normalizing 30
normative 13, 30
notable 23, 29, 32
notably 13, 24, 32
notably 24
noteworthy 23, 31
notion 14
number A

object 14
objection 31
objective A
objectivity 31
observable 30, 31
observant 31
observational 30
observe 30
obtain 3
obtainable 32
offset 14
omit 14, 32
omitted 32
ontology 30
operative 21
opinions A
opportune 23
opportunities A
opportunity A
oppose 14

optimal 14, 28
optimism A
optimum 14
option A
orienting 25
originality 32
oscillation 27, 30
ostensibly 26
outcome A
outcomes A
outliers 30
outline 14
outset 29
overabundance 28
overlap 25, A
overlook 32
oversee 14
oversight 32
overwhelming 32
overwhelmingly 24

pain A
palpable 27
paradigm 29
paradox 14, 24
paradoxically 24
parity 25
part A
partial 14, 28
partially 32
parts A
passive 31
patterns A
paucity 29
perceive 22, 26, 30, 31
perceived 31
percentiles 30
perceptible 27, 30
perception 14
perceptive 14
performance A
periodic 23
periodically 24
peripheral 23
perpendicular 30
perpetually 24
perseverance 31, 32

persistent 15, 23
perspective 16, A
persuasive 32
pervasive 15, 28
phrasing 31
picture A
pinnacle 29
pivotal 23
plan A
plans A
plausible 15
plentiful 28
plethora 28
point A
polarity 25
policies A
policy A
ponder 32
pooled 30
populous 28
portray 15
portrayal A
position A
postulate 22, 26
potential A
power A
practice A
practitioner 21
pragmatist 21
praise A
precede 15
precipitate 27
preclude 15
preconception 31
predetermined 31
predictable 23
predictably 24
predominantly 15, 16 (primarily)
preliminary 15, 31
prematurely 24
premise 15, 29
prescriptive 31
presently 24
pressure A
presumably 24
presume 22
pretence 26
prevail 32
prevalent 15, 28, 29
prevent 15
primarily 15 (predominantly), **16**, 24
primitive 23
principal 29
principally 24
principles A
probe 16, 31
problem A
problematic 16, 23
problems A
procedure 29
procedures A
proceed 15
process A
processes A
proclaim 22, 26
productive 23
profits A
profound 23
profuse 28
profusion 29
program A
programs A
progress A
progressive 23
projections 21
proliferate 25
proliferating 28
prolonged 23
prominent 16, 28, 29
promptly 24
prone 16
proponent 16, 21
proportion A
prospective 16, 23
protagonist 21
protocol 31
protracted 23
proven 32
proximity 16
purportedly 26
purpose A
purposeful 31
purview 29

quantifiable 30
quantify 30
quartiles 30
question A
questionable 23, 26
questions A

ramify 25
rapport 25, 31
rate A
rationalist 21
reading A
readjustment 32
realistic 32
reason A
reasons A
reassess 29
reassessment 21, 32
reassign 3
rebuke 25, 26
recall 16
receptive 31
reciprocal 30, 31
recognized 26
recognition 16, 29
recommendations A
records A
recovery A
rectify 27
recurrent 23
recursive 30
reduction 28
redundancy 28
re-evaluation 32
refine 17, 27
refinement 31, 32
reflect 17, 21, 32
reflection 31
reflections 21
reform 27
refute 26
reinforce 17
reinterpretation 32
related 30
relations A

relationship A
relatively 17
reliable 31
reliance 17
reluctant 31
remedy 27
renewable 17
renewed 17, 29
repeatability 32
repeated 23
repercussion 27
replete 28
replicate 17, 32
report A
reportedly 17, 26
reports A
represent 8
reproach 25
reproducible 32
requirements A
research A
resolve 17
resounding 32
resources A
respective 17
response A
responses A
responsive 23, 31
restricted 28
restrictions 32
restrictive 23, 28
results A
rethink 32
reticent 31
retrospectively 24
reveal 7
review A
reward A
rhetorical 31
richness 28
rigid 31
risk A
robust 18, 30
robustness 30
role A
rooted 25
routinely 18, 24
rules A

salient 18
sample A
scale A
scarce 28
scarcely 26
scarcity 29
scenario A
sceptical 26
scope 28, 29
score A
scrutinize 22
seemingly 26
segmented 25
segregated 25
seminal 29
sequential 23, 31
sequentially 24
services A
setting A
sharply 30
shift 27
shortfall 32
shrinkage 28
significant 27
signify 18
similarity 18, 25
simplify 22, 30
simultaneous 23
simultaneously 24
situate 18
situation A
size A
sizeable 28
skeptics 21
skewed 30
skills A
society A
solution A
solutions A
sources A
sparsely 28
specialist 18
specialize 18
speculate 22
speculation 18, 21, 26
speculative 26, 31
spiralling 28
spirit A
spontaneity 31
spontaneously 24
sporadic 23
spurious 26, 31, 32
stabilize 27
stagnation 27
stances A
standardized 31
standards A
standing 18
standpoint 29, 31
statement A
statewide 28
steadily 18, 27
steady 28
stellar 23
step A
stepwise 30
stipulation 21
stochastic 30
strategic 23
strategies A
stratification 25
strengths A
stringently 31
strive 22
structure A
students A
study A
subjective 19
subjectivity 31
subjects A
subordinate 21
subsequently 19, 24
substantial 19, 28
substantiate 22
substantiated 26
subtext 31
success A
successive 23
successively 24
sufficient 28
sufficiently 19
suggest 22

suggestive 25
suitability 19
superfluity 28
suppose 22
supposition 26, 29
surfeit 28
surmise 22
surplus 28
susceptible 19
suspect 22
sustainable 27
sustained 27, 28
symbolic 23
symbolize 8 (embody), **19**
synchronous 23
synergy 25
synonymous 25
synthesize 25
system A
systematic 19
systemwide 28

tabulate 30
tacit 31
targets A
task A
teachers A
technically 24
technique A
techniques A
technology A
template 32
temporarily 24
tendency 19
tensions A
tentative 31, 32
text A
themes A
theoretical 11 (hypothetical), **19**, 24
theoretically 24
theories A
theorize 29
theory A
thinking A
thoughts A
threat A
time A
traditions A
training A
trait 20
traits A
trajectory 30
transient 23
transition 20
transitory 27
transpose 27
treatment A
trivial 23
trough 30
truism 26
trusted 26
trustworthiness 31

unanticipated 32
unattainable 32
undeniable 32
underdeveloped 29
underlying 20, 31
underpinning 29
under-represented 29
understanding A
undertake 20
undetected 27
undoubtedly 20, 24, 26
unequivocal 26
unexplained 29
unfold 31
unfounded 26
unified 20
uniform 27
uniformity 30
union 25
unit A
units A
univariate 30
unmistakably 26
unobserved 27
unprecedented 23
unpredictable 27
unquestionably 26, 32
unrealistic 26
unreliable 23, 26
unsatisfactory 28
unsubstantiated 26
unsupported 26
untested 26
unwilling(ness) 31
unwittingly 24
usage A
use (v) 20, (n) A
useful 32
U-shaped 30
utilize 20

vague 26
valid 23
validated 26, 32
valuable 23
value A
values A
variables A
variance 20, 25, 27
verbatim 31
verdict A
verified 26, 32
verify 20, 32
viable 10 (feasible), **20**, 32
viably 32
victory A
view A
views A
vindicate 32
vindicated 26
violence A
virtues A
visionary 21
visualization 21
visualize 30
vital 23
volatile 23

way A
wide-ranging 28
words A
work A
works A
worth A

zenith 30