

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

1. Neutral vs academic

In writing, academics use rather formal expressions uncommon in everyday language.

NEUTRAL	FORMAL	NEUTRAL	FORMAL
in short, briefly	<i>in sum, to sum up</i>	only	<i>solely</i>
basically	<i>essentially</i>	mainly, mostly	<i>primarily</i>
almost, more or less	<i>virtually</i>	try	<i>attempt</i>

2. Nouns referring to ideas and phenomena

(environmental) *issues*, (Darwin's) *theory*, *the model of* (how elements relate to each other), *the nature of* (intelligence), *the principle* (of least effort), *the pattern* (of results), *a feature* (of the new SW), beyond *the scope of* (this essay), *perspectives/views on*, *research into*, (new) *approach to*

3. Verbs for structuring academic problems

discuss (a problem), *investigate* (attitudes), *illustrate* (a point), *conduct* (a set of experiments), *consider* (advantages and disadvantages), *analyse* (recent events), *demonstrate* (the ability), *identify* (constants and variables), *support or challenge* (a statement), *examine* (the situation), *provide* (statistical evidence), *include* (a discussion), *affect* (growth), *develop* (methods), *establish* (the quality of), *account for* (the decrease), *present* (data), *approach* (a problem), *describe* (the situation), *explore* (the relationship between), *emphasise* (the importance of training)

4. Adjectives

A.+prepositions: *relative, relevant, specific, common, appropriate to, characteristic, typical of*

A.-opposites: *abstract* (problem) *x* *concrete* (examples), *simple* (issue) *x* *complex* (circumstances), *accurate* (picture) *x* *inaccurate* (assessments), *rough* (estimates) *x* *precise* (calculations) *specific* (problem) *x* *general* (terms)

A.-combinations with nouns: *apparent* (discrepancy), *potential* (problem), *principal* (cause), *rigorous* (methodology)

5. Adverbs

comparatively/relatively, especially/particularly, primarily, mostly/largely, directly-indirectly, somewhat-considerably, essentially, approximately-precisely, rarely-frequently, eventually (in the end, after some time), *ultimately* (finally, after other steps have been completed), *generally-specifically, merely, hardly ever, simply* (plainly, easily or absolutely, undoubtedly)

6. Phrasal verbs

often have one-word synonyms, which are usually of Latin origin and are more formal than their phrasal verb equivalents but both are appropriate when writing or speaking about academic subjects. Vary your language by using both.

PHRASAL VERB	SYNONYM	PHRASAL VERB	SYNONYM
<i>put forward</i> (a theory)	present, propose	<i>point up</i>	highlight
<i>carry out</i> (research)	conduct	<i>set out</i> (to do sth)	aim
<i>make up</i>	constitute	<i>set out</i>	describe
<i>Be made up of</i>	consist of	<i>go into</i>	discuss
<i>point out</i>	observe	<i>go against</i>	not be in agreement with

7. Nouns and the words they combine with

N. + adjectives

contact – useful, valuable, personal, constant, close, frequent, intermittent

debate – considerable, heated, intense, public, animated

elements – crucial, decisive, fundamental, conflicting, constituent

phenomenon – common, isolated, natural, recent, universal

results – conflicting, in/conclusive, unforeseen, preliminary, encouraging

role – decisive, challenging, influential, key, major

sample – random, representative

in... terms – absolute, relative, general, practical

way – alternative, efficient, practical, convenient, proper, acceptable

N. + verbs

contact – come into c. with, establish, maintain, break off, lose

debate – engage in, contribute to, d. surrounding an issue

elements – combine, differentiate, discern,

phenomena – observe, investigate, explain

results – collect, question, invalidate, falsify, publish

role – define, strengthen, play, take on

sample – take, provide, analyse

way – discover, devise, work out, develop

8. Adjectives + nouns

Adjectives of importance + nouns

important – aspect, contribution, difference, implications, point, question, reason, element

significant – increase, reduction, number, proportion

major/minor - role, changes, problem, factor, issue, concern, difference, theme, contribution, point

enormous/considerable – amount, expansion, number, range, diversity, difference, variation, extent, degree, impact, power, influence, significance, interest

particular – interest, attention, significance, importance, concern

Adjectives of frequency + nouns

Widespread – belief, acceptance, support, opposition, assumption, use.

Common (frequent) – experience, practice, use, concern

(shared) – knowledge, ground, feature, interest

Specific – context, information, case, type, form, purpose, characteristics, conditions, example.

Other adjective + noun combinations

Inevitable combines with words relating to results or changes – consequence, outcome, collapse, decline, conflict, effect, developments

Explicit combines with words relating to how things are presented – reference, statements, comparison, account, mention

Relevant combines with words relating to evidence – data, documents, information, details, factors

9. Verbs + nouns + adverbs

Verb	Noun	Adverbs
<i>to be based <u>on</u></i>	research, theory, story, hypothesis	mainly, partly, loosely
<i>to associate <u>with</u></i>	word, idea, theorem, term	generally, commonly, invariably

<i>to discuss</i>	idea, problem, issue, question, topic, theme	at length, briefly, thoroughly
<i>to establish</i>	relationship, connection	firmly, clearly, conclusively
<i>to examine</i>	facts, evidence, effects, aspects	briefly, critically, thoroughly
<i>to demonstrate</i>	existence, need, effects, importance	clearly, convincingly
<i>to identify</i>	causes, factors, issues, properties, needs, approach, origin	clearly, correctly, closely

10. Prepositional phrases

IN conjunction, **in** comparison, **in** line with; **in** general, **in** particular; **in** addition to, in spite of, **in** terms of; **in** some ways, **in** turn, **in** most respects;

ON the whole, **on** the one hand ... **on** the other hand; **on** the basis of, **on** behalf of
with the exception of; as a result (of), **at** this point/stage; **for** the most part

11. Verbs + prepositions

to draw, comment, concentrate, focus, rely/rest **on**

to be exposed, attributed, traced, to amount, attend (deal with, give one's attention) **to**

to associate, provide, couple, equip **with**

to depart, benefit, exclude **from**

to write, speak of (rather formal), convince, dispose **of**

to account search, call argue **for**

12. Nouns + prepositions

book, article, essay, lecture, project, assignment **about, on**

research, investigation, insight, inquiry **into**

analysis, examination, exploration, study, issue **of**

problem, difficulty **of, with**

reason, motivation, rationale **for**

look, attempt **at**

changes, differences, increase, decrease **in**

influence, emphasis, effect **on**

basis, idea, lack, means **of**

reason, need, basis, case, preference **for**

relation, approach, response, attention **to**

attitude, tendency, move, progress **to/towards**

principle, assumptions, rationale, logic **behind**

relationship, difference, distinction **between**

13. Referring to source materials

The... literature suggests that, the ... draws its data from/draws primarily on, several secondary sources were also consulted, ... proved a valuable resource, I also surveyed the literature on, I directly/indirectly cite those works which, an extensive body of literature exists on, as noted, is often attributed to, Is dealt with in, ... is treated separately from the main body of...

! Avoid plagiarism, i.e., using other people's work while pretending it is your own, without clearly acknowledging the source of the information.

14. Degrees of certainty

Being tentative

There is some evidence that..., it can be argued that..., it may not be the case that..., it would seem/appear that..., we can presume that..., there seems/appears to be some evidence that..., we can draw the tentative conclusion that...

It is true or almost true

It is undoubtedly true that..., it is, of course..., it is evident that..., the research will probably lead to..., there is a tendency for..., there is every likelihood that...

The writer is unsure

... has allegedly come to some...conclusions, ... is reportedly...

15. Criticism of/ reference to an author

... asserts/claims/believes that, in his/her view, ... touches on, ... calls for,
... underestimates/overestimates, ignores, ... is not persuasive, ... does not ring true, worse,
the evidence is ... at best

16. Organizing your writing

Working through a list of different things – *firstly, secondly, thirdly, next, lastly/finally*

Changing topic/bringing in new points / *we now/ let us (now) turn to*

Referring forward – *below, in the next section, later,*

Referring back - *above, in the preceding section, earlier, as we have seen*

Referring to examples, diagrams, pages / *as can be seen, see, for example*

Source: McCarthy, Michael, O'Dell, Felicity. *Academic Vocabulary in Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008