

Essential General Academic Vocabulary Guide for Students in Grades 6–12

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General academic vocabulary is the language of school and tests. It is more likely to be used in written expression rather than speech. Using general academic vocabulary in your own writing helps create a more formal writing style.

Word	Definition	Example Sentence
analyze	to study or look at something carefully with focus	Analyze the following passage to determine the author's point of view.
apply	to connect a skill or concept to another situation	Apply the three most essential elements of British rule to Colonial Boston's economic hardships.
appropriate	right or correct in a specific situation or context	Include three pieces of appropriate textual evidence to support your claim.
argument	a discussion (written or oral) in which people take different stands	In your argument , please be certain that your claim is clear and your evidence sufficient.
assess	to make a judgment about	After reading the essay, assess the merit of the claim.
audience	the people who receive a message or information, whether written or oral	Your response should be clearly appropriate for the intended audience .
cite	to mention or quote as an example or to support an idea, claim, or opinion	When summarizing the reading, please cite the source, title, and author.
claim	to say that something is absolute or true when others may say it is not	Include a claim that clearly states your stand on extending the school day.
clarify	to make something easier to understand	Clarify your position on using social media in school.
closure	description of how something has been completed or solved	Your concluding paragraph should bring closure to your argument.
compare	to see what is similar about two or more items or decide which is better	Compare the causes of the Korean War with those of the Vietnam War and decide which was more justified.
compose	to create and/or write	Compose a letter to the editor regarding student rights.
contrast	to see what is different about two or more items or to decide which is better	Contrast the poetry of Plath with that of Dickinson, and determine who was more feminist.
conventions	a way of doing something that is widely followed (grammar/language mechanics)	A strong command of English conventions is essential for a journalist.
counterclaim	a claim that disagrees with or goes against a previous claim	All effective arguments must address at least one counterclaim .
credible	reasonable to trust or believe	Include credible evidence in your answer.
critique	to express your opinion about the good and bad parts of something	You are to summarize the reading, not critique it.
define	to explain the meaning of something	Define your position on early voting.
delineate	to clearly show or describe something	Delineate your methods for solving this equation.
describe	to say or write what someone or something is like	Describe the most important event in the story.
design	the way in which something is planned and made	Identify the flaw in this design and explain how it resulted in failure.
detail	a fact or piece of information about something	In your response, include a sufficient number of supporting details .
determine	to discover the facts or truth about something; to decide what will happen	How do you determine what evidence is credible?
develop	to grow or change and become more advanced	You must develop your theory in a logical and concise manner.
dialogue	a conversation between two or more people, groups, or entities	The internal dialogue of the protagonist was incredibly disturbing.
e.g.	a Latin abbreviation that means "for example"	Some paragraphs (e.g. , the first and last) are vague.
evaluate	to judge value or condition in a careful and thoughtful way	Evaluate the following two speeches and determine which is more likely to sway voters.

evidence	something which shows that a belief or proposal exists, is true, or is valid	<i>Citing textual evidence, evaluate who is a worse father, Claudius or Polonius.</i>
explain	to clarify or simplify by giving reasons or details	<i>Looking at this student response, please explain what the error was.</i>
fact	true and provable piece of information	<i>Good writers cite facts when making arguments.</i>
formal style	impersonal, objective, precise use of language	<i>Students should always use a formal style in academic writing.</i>
formulate	to develop all the details of a plan	<i>Formulate your response before you answer the prompt.</i>
identify	to know and say who someone is or what something is	<i>Identify the critical terms in this question before you attempt to answer it.</i>
imagine	to create an idea or picture in your mind	<i>Imagine what the setting of this story looks like.</i>
infer	to guess that something is true because of the information you have	<i>What can you infer from the information that the government has shared with voters?</i>
integrate	to combine one thing with another so that they become a whole	<i>In your response, integrate the beliefs of at least two cultures we have studied.</i>
interpret	to explain or understand in a specified way	<i>Does the following graph interpret the data correctly?</i>
justify	to prove or show something to be just, right, or reasonable	<i>Please make a claim that you can verbally justify.</i>
logical	using reason	<i>Use logical sequencing in your answer.</i>
mood	the atmosphere in a situation	<i>The mood of the poem is glum.</i>
objective tone	neutral, factual, and unbiased way of presenting information	<i>Objective tone may be desirable in argument writing, but it might not work for persuasion.</i>
organization	the arrangement of parts in an order appropriate to the task	<i>Use chronological organization in your plot summary.</i>
paraphrase	to reword something written or spoken by someone else	<i>Paraphrase this statement by Winston Churchill.</i>
passage	a portion or section of a written work; a paragraph, verse, etc.	<i>Evaluate the following passage for its impact on the teenage reader.</i>
phrase	a brief utterance or remark	<i>Which phrase is more persuasive?</i>
plagiarize	unauthorized use of another's words	<i>Be careful that you do not unintentionally plagiarize.</i>
point of view	the position from which something or someone is observed	<i>Can you determine the point of view of this writer from his use of language?</i>
precise	definite or exact	<i>Your response should be precise, not vague.</i>
predict	to say what will happen in the future	<i>Based on chapter one, can you predict the conflict?</i>
rank	relative position or standing	<i>List three main causes of the Depression in rank order.</i>
reason	basis of an argument; to support with evidence	<i>You must include more than one reason to support your claim.</i>
relevant	connected to the subject	<i>Evidence is not strong if it is not relevant.</i>
source	where the information comes from, can be written, oral, audio, video, etc.	<i>Include more than one source in your evidence.</i>
specific	precise or particular	<i>Include a specific reference to an expert in your answer.</i>
sufficient	enough	<i>Include sufficient information to solve the problem.</i>
summarize	brief restatement of important points of a writing or oral statement	<i>Summarizing is not the same thing as retelling!</i>
support	to uphold or defend as valid or right	<i>Support your assertion with three pieces of evidence.</i>
synthesize	to combine a number of things into a coherent whole	<i>Synthesize the four main ideas in this reading.</i>
text	the words that make up a writing	<i>Read the text closely before you attempt to answer.</i>
theme	main idea or underlying meaning that may be stated directly or indirectly	<i>How did you identify the theme of man's inhumanity to man in the novel?</i>
tone	quality, feeling, or attitude expressed by the words	<i>The author's tone tends to predict the theme.</i>
transform	to change something completely, usually in a good way	<i>How did the chemical transform in your lab?</i>