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Introduction

In order for students to acquire new knowledge and learning, they must be able to understand what they read, hear, and are asked to do in the classroom. According to Robert Marzano, a leading researcher in education and author of several books on academic vocabulary, students must comprehend academic vocabulary in order to understand instruction and academic texts. Often, students have a hard time writing to prompts or responding to instructions because they don't know exactly what is being asked. This is because they don't understand the meanings behind instructional verbs or how these words are used in an academic context.

What Is Academic Vocabulary?

Academic vocabulary is the language of the classroom. It includes academic language—the specific words and phrases that students encounter in their academic reading, assignments, and daily classroom activities—as well as the grammar and language structures that make up classroom discussions. Academic vocabulary incorporates words not always used in everyday conversation, and sentences may be more complex. In some cases, students encounter words that have different meanings than they do in other contexts.

Academic vocabulary refers to words and phrases that are used in the process of learning. Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist, worked with colleagues to create and publish a taxonomy that provides a framework for classroom instruction. Bloom's Taxonomy has been updated to reflect the action words students encounter in their learning while maintaining a hierarchy of higher-order thinking. Each level contains key words found in academic tasks for that level of critical thinking. Current standards emphasize the need for students to develop critical-thinking skills. Bloom's Taxonomy labels the levels of higher-order thinking as remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

Teachers and students use academic language to discuss new knowledge and concepts, develop ideas, talk about texts, and engage in classroom activities. This book will focus on terms used specifically in classroom instruction. Many of these terms are included in Bloom's Taxonomy, which enables teachers to identify objectives and plan instruction that develop critical-thinking skills and to assess student learning. Direct instruction in academic vocabulary supports students by helping them understand what they are expected to do.

This book contains three main components: strategies to help teachers explain academic vocabulary; lessons that present definitions, examples, and practice of academic instructional verbs; and a glossary, which includes related, non-specific academic language to further develop students' working vocabulary.



How to Use This Book

Know the Lingo! Mastering Academic Vocabulary contains strategies, specific lessons and activities, and a glossary to help teachers illustrate and teach instructional verbs and other academic vocabulary. Introduce and discuss the concept of academic vocabulary with students. Explain that in school, teachers ask students to do certain things in the classroom. When teachers tell students what to do or how to do something, we call these sentences *instructions* or *directions*. It is important for students to understand what the words used in directions mean, so they will be able to successfully do what is being asked. In these lessons, students will learn the meanings of words teachers use when giving instructions. Other times, students read words that tell them what to do; these are called *written directions*. When first starting these lessons, help students understand the nature of and expected response to a *prompt*. A prompt is a sentence that tells students which action to take. Review also the concept of *task*, meaning a specific piece of work to be done, often assigned by another person. The glossary lists additional academic vocabulary students encounter in the context of instruction, activities, and other classroom materials. Students need to understand the meanings of these words in order to successfully complete academic tasks within the classroom. Copy these pages for students and explain to them that they will keep their glossaries handy to help them understand academic words used in the prompts and tasks in the lessons.


The strategies and examples listed on “Strategies to Teach Academic Vocabulary” (pages 6–7) offer support for students who need additional assistance in making connections between words, their meanings, and expected actions. They may be used with various instructional verbs and other academic vocabulary to teach students and help them incorporate academic vocabulary into their daily learning.

The “Academic Instructional Verbs” section (pages 8–103) highlights grade-appropriate instructional verbs that students will find included in many prompts. These words include *describe*, *determine*, *evaluate*, and *summarize*. The word list is compiled from grade-level standards and Bloom’s Taxonomy. Lessons are presented in an order that correlates to the frequency with which students might encounter the word. For example, most prompts ask students to “write,” so that lesson is one of the first taught. Each verb is explained in the following ways:

- **Define:** Students are provided with a definition of the instructional verb.
- **Study:** Students are asked to review sample prompts and tasks that include the instructional verb as well as sample responses to the prompts and tasks.
- **Practice:** Students practice answering prompts and completing tasks that contain the instructional verb.
- **Check:** Students participate in a small-group or whole-class activity to confirm their understanding of the instructional verb.
- **Review:** Students are reminded of how the instructional verb is used.
- **Collaborate:** Students collaborate in pairs to further demonstrate their understanding of the instructional verb.



How to Use This Book (cont.)

Preview each lesson to ensure you have the needed materials on hand. When this icon appears , prepare or complete the activity as directed. Guide students through the sample prompts and sample answers provided in each lesson to help students understand the meaning of the academic verb. Then preview the practice prompts and tasks to which students will respond. Ensure students have the “Academic Concepts Glossary” (pages 104–108) for reference as they complete individual, whole-class, small-group, or paired activities. Designate a place for students to store their glossaries for easy access during classroom instruction and activities. Sometimes a sample prompt or activity includes a short reading passage for students. Most reading passages fall within the second-grade reading range based on Lexile measures (420L–650L) for this grade level. For further review, consider using this comprehension check format as a follow-up to the lesson activities:

Check Your Work

Think about your answers to the following questions. Discuss your thoughts with a partner or other classmates, or write your responses in a journal entry.

- Did you know what to do?
- Was it easy or hard to understand what the word or phrase means?
- Could you tell someone else what to do if they heard this word?
- In your own words, what does this word mean?

Note: Any Common Core State Standards addressed in lesson activities are listed on pages 110–112.

Academic Vocabulary Notebooks

Consider having students keep academic vocabulary notebooks. Notebooks will help students with word recognition in future encounters. Encourage students to refer to their notebooks during various cross-curricular activities.

- Create and maintain a class “journal” to observe and discuss academic vocabulary in practice throughout a school day.
- Have students copy the word and a simple definition for reference in small-group discussions and activities.
- Have students write observations and new information about academic vocabulary.
- Have students write comments about their experiences with academic vocabulary in classroom activities.
- Encourage students to make connections across content areas.
- Have students discuss and compare their observations with classmates.
- Have students compare terms within or between subject areas.
- Provide activities that engage students in using terms from their notebooks.
- Have students edit and revise their notebooks to reflect new learning.



Name: _____

Tell

DEFINE

Question: What does it mean to tell something?

Answer: When we tell something, we put it into words. We might say what happened or give a story.

STUDY

Sample Prompt: Use words to tell about a holiday we celebrate in the fall.

Sample Answer: We have Thanksgiving in the fall.

Sample Prompt: Tell one thing you like about holidays.

Sample Answer: On a holiday, people might not have to go to school or work.

PRACTICE

① **Prompt:** Tell about your favorite holiday. Why do you like it?

② **Prompt:** Use words to tell some things people do on holidays in the winter.

③ **Prompt:** What details might you tell in a story about a holiday?

④ **Prompt:** Tell about something you and your classmates did to celebrate a special day. After you put the words on the lines below, say them to one or more classmates.




Name: _____

Tell (cont.)

CHECK

Look back at what the word tell means.

- ① Discuss together with classmates things you like about holidays.
- ② Work with your teacher to create a web. 
- ③ Take turns with classmates saying words to put in the web to tell things you like about holidays.

REVIEW

- When we tell about something, we give information about it.
- We tell what happened when we give a report.
- We can tell a story by putting it into words.

COLLABORATE

When we look back at what this word means, we see that it means to say or write words about something.

- ① Tell a classmate about your favorite holiday and why you like it. Read the words you used in Practice Prompt #1.
- ② Listen to your classmate tell about his or her favorite holiday.
- ③ Work with your classmate to tell a story about a favorite holiday. Help each other put words on paper so other people can read your story.



Name: _____

Compare

DEFINE

Question: What does it mean to compare two things or ideas?

Answer: When we compare two things or ideas, we judge them against each other. We look for how they are alike and different.

STUDY

Sample Prompt: Compare a banana and an orange to show how they are alike and different.

Sample Answer: We peel both bananas and oranges before we eat them. Both are good fruits to pack in a lunch. They taste very different. An orange is juicy, and a banana is not juicy.

Sample Prompt: How would you compare the ways peaches and cantaloupe are alike?

Sample Answer: They are both sweet. The part we eat in each fruit is light orange.

PRACTICE

① **Prompt:** Compare an apple and a pear. How are they alike? How are they different?

② **Prompt:** Look back at the two fruits you compared in Practice Prompt #1. Which do you like better? Why? Think about what each fruit is like to decide which is better.

③ **Prompt:** How do people compare different fruits? In what ways can fruits be compared?




Name: _____

Compare (cont.)

CHECK

Look back at what the word compare means.

- ① Work together with classmates to decide which two fruits you would like to compare.
- ② Share your thoughts and ideas as you and your classmates talk about how these fruits are alike and different.
- ③ Take part as the class creates a Venn diagram on an interactive whiteboard or chart paper to show how you have compared these fruits. 

REVIEW

- When we compare two things, we think about how they are alike and different.
- Sometimes we compare two things we know are alike to show how they are alike.
- We can compare our answers to a question or prompt to classmates' answers to learn from each other.
- Sometimes when we compare two things, we decide which is better based on certain qualities.

COLLABORATE

When we look back at what this word means, we see that it means to think about how two things are alike and different.

- ① Share your answers to Practice Prompts #1 and #2 with a partner.
- ② Compare your answers. How are they alike? How are they different?

- ③ Think about how your partner answered the prompts.
- ④ How did hearing what someone else thinks change your ideas about these fruits?

- ⑤ Write a new answer to the prompts to show how your ideas changed. Use a separate piece of paper.