



Table of Contents

Introduction	3	Analyze	58
How to Use This Book	4	Evaluate	60
Strategies to Teach Academic Vocabulary	6	Illustrate	62
Academic Instructional Verbs	8	Construct	64
Collaborate	8	Criticize	66
Provide	10	Incorporate	68
Report	12	Interpret	70
Explain	14	Justify	72
Develop	16	Strengthen	74
Describe	18	Distinguish	76
Plan	20	Differentiate	78
Prepare	22	Persuade	80
Argue	24	Document	82
Compare	26	Compose	84
Contrast	28	Debate	86
Establish	30	Draft	88
Apply	32	Model	90
Categorize	34	Elaborate	92
Predict	36	Summarize	94
Conclude/Draw a Conclusion	38	Paraphrase	96
Recommend	40	Revise	98
Defend	42	Infer/Make an Inference	100
Investigate	44	Reconstruct	102
Cite	46	Academic Concepts Glossary	104
Question	48	Lexile Measures	109
Employ	50	Meeting Standards	110
Assess	52		
Interview	54		
Quote	56		



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*, *employ*, *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 “report,” 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 sixth-grade reading range based on Lexile measures (925L–1070L). 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: _____

Describe



DEFINE

Question: What does it mean to describe something?

Answer: When we describe something, we create a picture with words. We give details about people, places, things, or events. We might describe the characters, setting, and events in a story.



STUDY

Sample Prompt: What is important to remember when you describe a natural resource or natural feature?

Sample Answer: It is important to include sensory details to describe the natural scene in a way that helps readers form a picture in their minds.

Sample Prompt: How would you describe a cascade?

Sample Answer: A cascade is a small, steep waterfall. Some cascades fall over rocks.



PRACTICE

① **Task:** Use a dictionary, a thesaurus, and/or other resources to understand the differences between waterfalls, cascades, and rapids. [!]

② **Prompt:** How would you describe Niagara Falls?

③ **Prompt:** How would you describe a waterfall you have viewed in person or in a photograph?

④ **Prompt:** Describe what might happen during a visit to a waterfall.

⑤ **Prompt:** Use your notes from Practice Prompts #3 and #4 to write a narrative describing a real or imagined experience visiting a waterfall. Write your narrative on a separate piece of paper.



Name: _____

Describe (cont.)

CHECK

Look back at what the word describe means.

- ① Work together with a small group to determine which natural resource you will describe.
- ② Discuss each of the questions below to plan how you will describe your natural resource.
 - What sensory details would best describe this natural resource?
 - What similes or metaphors would help readers form a picture in their minds?
 - What precise words can we use to describe the natural resource?
 - What organizational structure will we use to describe the natural resource: chronological (time order), spatial (location), or order of importance?
- ③ Work together to write an informative piece that describes your natural resource. Use a separate piece of paper.

REVIEW

- To describe something means to create a picture with words.
- We can describe the setting of a story. We can also describe the characters and events in a story.
- When we describe, we give details to tell about something.

COLLABORATE

When we look back at what this word means, we see that it means to create a picture of something with words.

- ① Read the narrative a classmate wrote in response to Practice Prompt #5.
- ② On a separate piece of paper, draw a picture of the setting your partner described in his or her narrative.
- ③ Underneath the picture, complete the tasks below.
 - Describe the characters in the story.
 - Describe the main event in the story.
 - List additional details your partner might have included to better describe the narrated experience.



Name: _____

Investigate

DEFINE

Question: What does it mean to investigate something?

Answer: When we investigate something, we find out as much as possible by observing or studying it closely.

STUDY


Sample Prompt: How can we investigate a topic?

Sample Answer: We can investigate a particular topic by asking questions about it, researching, and exploring ideas. We can examine any evidence that will help us evaluate and understand what we observe and study.

Sample Prompt: Why is it important to take notes about bibliographic information when we investigate a topic?

Sample Answer: If we later have a question about facts or other evidence, or want to learn more about a specific aspect of the topic, we can refer to our sources for additional information.

PRACTICE

① **Task:** Research to investigate a healthy, balanced diet. Take notes and include bibliographic information about your sources. 

② **Prompt:** Which strategies and skills did you use to investigate the topic?

③ **Prompt:** What role does taking notes play when you investigate a topic?

④ **Task:** Create a fact card on the topic you investigated. Include interesting information you learned about your topic. Add graphics and other visual elements, as needed, to clarify your information. Use an index card or a separate piece of paper.



Name: _____

Investigate (cont.)

CHECK

Look back at what the word investigate means.

Use a separate piece of paper to complete these activities:

- ① Work together with a small group to investigate vegan and vegetarian diets.
- ② As you investigate the topic, create a digital or print K-W-L chart, similar to the sample shown below.

K What I Already Know About the Topic	W What I Want to Investigate About the Topic	L What I Learned When I Investigated the Topic

- ③ As a group, take notes on the process you use to investigate the topic and complete the chart.
- ④ Compile your notes into a single list of steps one might take to investigate a topic.
- ⑤ Share your list of steps with the rest of the class.

REVIEW

- When we investigate something, we observe or study it closely.
- We investigate something by finding out facts about it.
- We try to get information about something when we investigate it.

COLLABORATE

When we look back at what this word means, we see that it means to observe or study something closely to find out more about it.

- ① Share with a classmate the fact card you created for Practice Task #4.
- ② Discuss with your partner how the healthy diet you investigated compares to vegetarian or vegan diets.
- ③ Create a web to organize the information you have learned so far about the topics you investigated.
Use a separate piece of paper.
- ④ Work together to investigate further, as needed, to fill in any gaps in your web.