

Handy Tips on Improving Your Academic Vocabulary

The following list of pointers will assist you greatly in both expressing academic vocabulary, especially in your writing (research papers and creative essays), as well as understanding it when you encounter it within a variety of printed sources.

Dull Everyday Words You Must Avoid at All Costs!

1. *thing* or *stuff* (and its variants, such as *something*, *nothing*, *anything*, etc.): Much better options include...*factor*, *element*, *aspect*, *characteristic*, *component*, *trait*, etc.
2. *good*: For more pizzazz, try words such as *advantageous*, *beneficial*, *helpful*, *useful*, *effective*, *impressive*, *excellent*, *superb*, *phenomenal*, etc.
3. *a lot*: Heard frequently in casual conversation but fails to impress on paper. More sophisticated choices...*numerous*, *a number of*, *many*, *multiple*, *various*, *copious amounts*, etc.
4. *kids*: Too slang for the world of academia! Better alternatives: *children*, *little ones*, *youth*, *youngsters*, *toddlers*, etc.

Useful Synonyms that will Enhance Your Research Papers

said: So often, you are required to quote a number of sources, but instead of writing *said* repeatedly, try these more varied substitutions...*stated*, *expressed*, *commented*, *described*, *pointed out*, *asserted*, *emphasized*, *opined*, *analyzed*, *elaborated*, *stressed*, *explained*, *demonstrated*, *articulated*, etc. Example: As Jones *stressed* in his autobiography, "My life was full of many twists and turns."

A Grammatical Construction that Served Me Well on Many a Long Term Paper

the fact that: Suppose you want to make a comment about this vocabulary course, hopefully a statement along the lines of...*I like learning so many new vocabulary words*. The previous sentence sounds acceptable, but if you want to improve it and sound more academic, you could reword it as such: "I like *the fact that* I am learning so many new vocabulary words." Which comment gives a slightly better impression?

Practice Transforming Your Short, Choppy Sentences into "Masterpiece Sentences"

This is a step you would most likely not apply until you reach the editing stage of your writing, but it is a very vital one. The goal is to take sentences that are too simple and sparse and perform a kind of makeover on them.

Example: Original sentence: *My friend shouted*.

1. Add an adjective in front of *friend*: *My loyal friend shouted*.
2. Add an adverb after *shouted*: *My loyal friend shouted urgently*.
3. Now substitute synonyms for *friend* and *shouted*: *My loyal companion bellowed urgently*.

THUS: *My friend shouted*.  *My loyal companion bellowed urgently*.

Which form of expression helps a reader visualize better and is more intriguing?

Final Note: These are the strategies, among many, that personally helped me excel in school. These techniques also stem from the insight I have gained after 7 years of proofreading students' papers. Be patient as you persevere in applying them, and you will eventually notice marked improvement in your ability to write and comprehend in any academic or professional setting.