

This list features academic words that you may see or hear on the reading and/or listening sections of the TOEFL and IELTS tests. Becoming familiar with these and similar words will also help you on the writing and speaking portions of the tests.

\*note: this list uses British spelling. (ex. 'maximise' — not 'maximize'.)

**v. = verb, n. = noun, adj. = adjective**

Academic Word List	
<b>access</b>	verb to be able to enter, reach, approach, etc. something “He couldn’t access his email account because someone had changed his password.”
<b>access</b>	noun the ability or right to enter, reach, approach, etc. something “I don’t have access to those files.”
<b>accurate</b>	adjective precise or exact; free from error (opposite = inaccurate) “The victim was unable to provide an accurate description of the criminal.”
<b>achieve</b>	verb to accomplish; to reach a certain standard “As a result of her hard work, she achieved an excellent score on her final.”
<b>acquire</b>	verb to get or come into possession of something; to accumulate or collect “Over 20 years of collecting stamps, I’ve acquired over 4,000 of them!”
<b>analyse</b>	verb to look at something closely; to examine in detail “After analysing the DNA sample, the police were able to identify the killer.”
<b>aspect</b>	noun a part or an element of something “Flexibility is just one aspect of being a successful gymnast.”
<b>assist</b>	verb to help or aid someone (noun = assistance) “They were assisted by an outside company when designing the program.”
<b>available</b>	adjective free to help; present or in stock (in regards to inventory) “We do not have enough resources available to complete the project.”
<b>aware</b>	adjective having knowledge of something; being conscious or cognizant of something “I wasn’t aware of the problem. Thank you for informing me.”
<b>benefit (from)</b>	verb to receive an advantage or make an improvement “Society has greatly benefited from technological advancements.”
<b>benign</b>	adjective gentle or kind; favorable; passive or inactive “The military cannot afford to be benign in this war.”
<b>comment (on)</b>	verb to make a statement about something “First, I would like to comment on the current environmental situation”
<b>compensate (for)</b>	verb to give an equivalent or a return for something else “If the government expects citizens to do this, they must compensate their citizens fairly.”
<b>component</b>	noun a part or element of something (see also: aspect)

		“To understand the whole problem, you must look at all of its separate components.”
<b>concentrate (on)</b>	verb	to focus your attention on something “In order to move forward, we must concentrate on finding realistic solutions to the problem.”
<b>consequence</b>	noun	a result or effect of something “He was executed as a consequence for his heinous actions.”
<b>consist (of)</b>	verb	to be made of something; to be composed of something “A healthy relationship must consist of trust and mutual respect.”
<b>constant</b>	adjective	regular and seemingly permanent (adverb = constantly) “It is difficult to deal with constant disagreement when working in a group.”
<b>construct</b>	verb	to develop or build; to make “Numerous condos are currently being constructed in the downtown core.”
<b>contribute</b>	verb	to give to a common cause, supply, or fund “I contributed over \$300 to charity last year.”
<b>convert (into)</b>	verb	to change or transform into “That building was recently converted into a restaurant.”
<b>correspond (with/to)</b>	verb	to be similar to something; to be in agreement with something “The words of politicians often don’t correspond with their actions.”
<b>crucial</b>	adjective	very important; vital “The media was crucial to changing public opinion about the Viet Nam war.”
<b>define (as)</b>	verb	to provide a definition; to give clarity or definition to something “The word ‘crucial’ can be defined as ‘extremely important’ or ‘vital.’”
<b>demonstrate</b>	verb	to provide a demonstration or to show how something functions “This satellite will demonstrate the technological power of our organization”
<b>design</b>	verb	to create or model “The factory assembly line was partially designed by Henry Ford.”
<b>disposal</b>	noun	the act of arranging or distributing; getting rid of something “A general is responsible for the effective disposal of his soldiers.”
<b>distinct</b>	adjective	clear and having easily-identifiable or specific characteristics “Dark chocolate is known for its distinct smell and taste.”
<b>emphasise</b>	verb	to place emphasis or special focus on something “The media constantly emphasises the dangers of illegal drugs.”
<b>erode</b>	verb	to destroy slowly over time; to disintegrate “Many religious leaders feel that secularism has eroded morality.”
<b>error</b>	noun	a mistake “Despite constant reminders and protests, governments continue to make

	errors.”
<b>estimate</b>	verb, noun to make an educated guess; to give a projection “Scientists have been estimating a massive population explosion over the next two decades.”
<b>exclude</b>	verb to keep someone/something from entering a group, society, project, etc. “When I was in high school, I was excluded from many activities due to my disability.”
<b>extract</b>	verb to get or obtain something from something else “Physical torture is not an effective means of extracting information from a human being.”
<b>flexible</b>	adjective not rigid; able to be shaped (opposite = inflexible) “Employers need to be flexible to the needs of their employees.”
<b>function</b>	noun the working purpose of something; ability “Cell phones are useful because they can serve multiple useful functions.”
<b>identical</b>	adjective the same or alike in appearance and/or character “The problem I have with suburban neighbourhoods is that all the houses look identical.”
<b>identify</b>	verb to recognise or verify the identity of someone/something “Even today, scientists continue to identify new types of plants and animals.”
<b>indicate</b>	verb to show or give evidence of something “Research indicates that cell phones can cause cancer.”
<b>indication (of)</b>	noun a sign or token “High blood pressure is a clear indication of stress.”
<b>interpretation</b>	noun an explanation or perception of something “Religious writings can have multiple interpretations.”
<b>item</b>	noun a separate piece or article of something “Anthropologists have recently uncovered 200 physical items pertaining to the Incas.”
<b>legislation</b>	noun the act or process of making laws; the laws which have been made “The current health legislation will be difficult for all political parties to accept.”
<b>location</b>	noun the place of something “Niagara Falls is a popular location for tourists.”
<b>logical</b>	adjective able to be explained or understood clearly (opposite = illogical) “The CEO has promised to take logical steps to ensure the future success of the company.”
<b>majority</b>	noun the greater part or number; over 50% of the population “The majority of citizens oppose the government’s proposed budget.”
<b>maximise</b>	verb to use to maximum effect or potential “The goal of any business is to maximise its profits.”

<b>minimise</b>	verb	to reduce as much as possible	“In any war, one of the primary objectives should be to minimise civilian casualties.”
<b>monitor</b>	verb	to watch and give attention	“Companies have numerous ways to monitor employee behaviour.”
<b>obtain</b>	verb	to get or receive	“In order to obtain respect, a person has to earn it.”
<b>obvious</b>	adjective	clear and easy to see	“There are some obvious similarities between French and English vocabulary.”
<b>occur</b>	verb	to happen or take place	“An earthquake is expected to occur here in the next 2-3 years.”
<b>option</b>	noun	a choice; one of several possibilities to be chosen	“When our options are limited, we are more likely to act decisively.”
<b>participate</b>	verb	to take part in something	“Thousands of talented athletes participate in the Olympics.”
<b>participation</b>	noun	the act of taking part in something	“Portugal was ridiculed for its participation in slavery.”
<b>period</b>	noun	a portion of time; a significant interval of time in history	“The 1700s were a period of great scientific advance.”
<b>precise</b>	adjective	exact or definite	“It is important for a teacher to give precise instructions.”
<b>predictable</b>	adjective	able to be predicted (opposite = unpredictable)	“The goal of science is to find predictable results.”
<b>prohibited</b>	adjective, verb	not allowed; forbidden	“These days, smoking is prohibited in many public places.”
<b>proportion</b>	noun	a part of a larger whole; the size of something	“A large proportion of modern problems are a result of negligence.”
<b>prospect</b>	noun	a potential candidate; a possibility of success, profit, etc.	“I was excited by the prospect of winning the lottery.”
<b>psychological</b>	adjective	relating to the mind or psychology	“We must pay attention to our psychological health.”
<b>purchase</b>	verb	to buy	“We’re planning to purchase a house next year.”
<b>pursue</b>	verb	to chase or follow	“Acting is a difficult career to pursue.”
<b>relevant</b>	adjective	connected to the current situation; pertinent (opposite = irrelevant)	“In an essay, we must only focus on relevant supporting details.”
<b>reliable</b>	adjective	able to be predicted or trusted; dependable (opposite = unreliable)	“Finding a reliable babysitter is difficult for most parents.”
<b>require</b>	verb	to have need of something; to need	

		“To take a masters course, one requires an undergraduate degree.”
<b>requirement</b>	noun	something which is obligatory, demanded, or needed
		“You do not meet the requirements for this position”
<b>resource</b>	noun	a support, supply, or aid of something that can be used when needed
		“If you want me to do this presentation, I will need more resources.”
<b>respond</b>	verb	to reply
		“When faced with a bully, it is important not to respond with anger.”
<b>retain</b>	verb	to remember; to continue to use
		“The most difficult part of learning is retaining the information”
<b>role</b>	noun	a position or customary function
		“The role of a parent is to provide safety for his/her child.”
<b>sector</b>	noun	a part or subdivision
		“It is the government’s job to protect all sectors of society.”
<b>secure</b>	adjective	safe; protected from harm (opposite = insecure)
		“Everyone wants to live in a secure neighbourhood.”
<b>select</b>	verb	to choose
		“We selected the best candidate for the job.”
<b>significant</b>	adjective	important; of consequence (opposite = insignificant)
		“Man landing on the moon was a significant achievement for science.”
<b>source</b>	noun	any place, person, or thing from which something else comes or originates
		“We can’t seem to locate the source of the problem.”
<b>status</b>	noun	someone’s position in relation to other people; the state or condition
		“His status as the top player in the game is unquestionable.”
<b>structure</b>	noun	the organization or arrangement of something
		“The structure of the education system needs to change.”
<b>substitute</b>	noun, verb	a replacement for someone/something
		“If you want to succeed, there is no substitute for hard work.”
<b>symbolise</b>	verb	to represent or be a symbol for something
		“In most cultures, it is understood that the dove symbolises peace.”
<b>task</b>	noun	a job or duty to be performed
		“Raising a family is not an easy task.”
<b>technique</b>	noun	a specific way of doing something; a certain skill
		“Most people don’t know that cooking requires hundreds of difficult techniques.”
<b>topical</b>	adjective	pertaining to current or local events or interests
		“Global warming has been extremely topical in the first half of the 21st century.”
<b>transform</b>	verb	to change into a different form
		“The internet has transformed the way we communicate.”
<b>trend</b>	noun	a style that is currently popular; the general course of something

	“Fashion trends are always changing.”
<b>vary</b>	verb            to be different; to alternate; to change or alter; to diversify “To write a good essay, you need to vary your vocabulary.”
<b>veritable</b>	adjective        being truly or very much so “I felt a veritable pain in my abdomen”
<b>visible</b>	adjective        able to be seen (opposite = invisible) “There has been a visible shift in public opinion towards the government.”
<b>wane</b>	verb            to decrease in strength, intensity, etc. “My interest in the movie waned the longer we watched it.”