

Essential General Academic Vocabulary Guide for Students in Grades K–2

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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
above	higher than	What is above the author's name on the book cover?
after	following something	Which month comes after April?
again	one more time	If you do not understand the sentence, read it again .
agree	to be alike or think alike	Which of the two characters agree ?
always	at all times	Names always start with a capital letter.
argument	ideas for and against the same thing	What is one argument for having a longer summer vacation?
because	for the reason that	The main character left home because of what two reasons?
beginning	the first part of something	In the beginning of the story, who is angry?
belief	a strong opinion	What belief did Martin Luther King, Jr. have that he is remembered for?
below	lower than	What two continents are below the equator?
best	better than all the others	What is the best answer for this question?
better	of a higher quality	Both of these answers are right. But which is better ?
between	the area in the middle	What number comes between 1 and 3?
both	two things together	Identify both children in the story.
cause	something that brings about a result	What caused the Puritans to come to the New World?
characteristic	a quality of a person, group, or thing	Name one characteristic of Margaret.
clue	a hint that helps solve a puzzle, problem, or mystery	What clues do you have that Mark will find a new friend at the fair?
complete	having all the parts; whole or finished	Add one more sentence to complete the story.
describe	tell or write about; create a picture in words	Describe the setting of the story completely.
detail	a small part of the whole; an item	What details tell you that Mary's opinion about John is wrong?
difference	something or somebody that is not the same as another	Can you identify three differences between living in the country and living in the city?
directions	information on which way to go or how to do something	Read the directions carefully before you write your answer.
effect	a change that happens because of something else	What is one effect of polluting the rain forests?
end	the point at which something stops or finishes	Can you create a different end for this story?
event	something that happens in a story or real life	Which event do you think was most important in the story?
evidence	something that gives proof or a reason to believe	What three pieces of evidence helped you make your prediction?
example	something that shows what a thing or group of things is like	Give one example of a mammal.
experience	something a person has done or lived through	Describe an experience that you have had that is similar to the one the main character had.
explain	to make clear or show in detail	Explain how to add two double-digit numbers together.
fact	something known to be true	What three facts are important to know about the American colonies?
few	a small number	In a few words, describe how a bee helps plants.
finish	to reach the end of or complete something	Your answer is not finished until you have completed your thoughts.
future	a time that has not come yet	What is one thing you hope happens to you in the future ?

graph	a picture that shows a relationship	What does this graph tell you about students and families in our school?
idea	a thought formed in the mind	Which of the children had a better idea ?
inside	the inner part or within	Why are those words inside an idea bubble?
list	to name things in a written form	Can you list two reasons why Joe should apologize?
main character	most important person in a book, story, or play	Who would you identify as the main character in this story?
main idea	most important thought in a book, story, or play	What is the main idea of this article about the discovery of germs?
many	a large number	Many students confuse the word capital with the word capitol.
middle	halfway between two things	Which object is in the middle of the triangle and the circle?
might	possible, but not sure	Which color might look good on a horse? Blue, orange, or brown?
must	have to do,	When answering your question, you must use complete sentences.
near	within a short space	On the map, name three cities that are near Detroit, Michigan.
never	not at any time	What three things should good classmates never do?
next	right after, following	What letter comes next ?
opinion	personal feelings or thoughts; viewpoint	When you state your opinion , be ready to give facts and examples to support it.
order	the way something is arranged in space or time	Please put these five words in alphabetical order .
outside	any space that is not inside	What three things can you do outside that you cannot do inside?
past	anything that happened before	What three things happened in the past that have taught you to be a better person?
position	the location of a person or thing	What position is best for doing your best handwriting?
predict	to tell what will happen before it happens	Can you predict what this story is about by the title or picture on the cover?
present	now	What is the present temperature on the thermometer?
prove	to show something to be true or correct	How could Columbus prove that he was in the New World?
reason	a cause of an action or event, the why of something	What reason could Bob give to explain his actions at the baseball game?
retell	to tell again; to tell in a different way, especially a story	Retell the story, and include all of the most important events and characters.
show	to give information in the form of numbers, words, or pictures	Can you show me how you got that answer?
similar	the same or alike	Which two books are the most similar ?
start	to begin	Why did the author start the story that way?
symbol	object or picture that represents something else	What does this symbol stand for?
text	words that appear in anything written or printed	Which part of the text was hardest for you to read?
title	the name of a book, film, play, piece of music, or other work of art	Can you think of a better title for this movie?
under	below or further down	How many items are listed under the word PLANTS?