



Vocabulary

“When biophrased into a cartogenian ormascapia, it is consistently found that a myospha ordinate ledepramactorially enslomiates into parquenforial dimensions, due to the fact that sepentengual misconsonment can only ever be absomented in a thristorial and elephantuan manner.”

What do you think of the sentence above? The vocabulary looks impressive, and the sentence structure is appropriate for English, but the sentence is impossible to understand. This is partly because most of the long words are made up, but also because there are so many long words, one after the other, that are not explained. It’s as if the reader is meant to know what they mean.

Choosing the right words for an academic essay can be difficult. You need to sound like you know what you’re talking about and show that you are developing your knowledge in your field of study. But you also need to be clear and use words that you know the meaning of; otherwise you risk making your writing unclear or even sounding like you don’t understand what you’re talking about.

Tips:

- **DO** use technical terms from your discipline - this shows that you’re developing an understanding of the major concepts and terms in your field.
- **DON’T** use words that you couldn’t explain to someone in simple terms. If a friend asked you ‘what does that word mean’ and you couldn’t explain it to them, avoid using it. It is better to use simpler words that you understand. If you don’t know what a word means or how to use it, you probably won’t be able to use it well in a sentence and then you end up sounding like you don’t know what you’re talking about! But...
- **DO** look up keywords and technical terms from your field in a dictionary and try to understand what they mean, so that you could explain the meaning to someone else. Look for how the word is used in the unit readings. If you want to use a technical term, make sure you use it in a similar way to how scholars in your field use it in their writing. Consider the following example:

Example from a scholarly text

‘Another factor to consider is whether the ESP class is made up of a **homogeneous** group from one discipline or profession, or a **heterogeneous** group of learners from different discipline, professions, or levels of management. Even a group from one company, or even one department of a company, is unlikely to be homogeneous if it contains senior managers, junior managers and secretaries, as each sub-group will have different needs.’ (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 152)

Comment

The terms ‘homogeneous’ and ‘heterogeneous’ are used in contrast with each other here. A group can be either homogeneous OR heterogeneous, but not both. From the text, we can work out that a ‘homogeneous’ group is one that contains similar kinds of people, whereas a ‘heterogeneous’ group is one where the people are of different kinds. It sounds like both are used as describing words (adjectives). Macquarie Dictionary definitions:

Homogeneous (adjective): composed of parts all of the same kind; not heterogeneous.

Heterogeneous (adjective): different in kind; unlike; incongruous.

Expressions to introduce quotations

The tables below show some examples of common verbs and expressions used to introduce quotations and ideas from other sources (see also the [Using sources](#) section on the Study Smart website). The first table includes ‘that’ in brackets - i.e. (that) - to show when the verb can project speech, i.e. you can use it to introduce the speech or ideas of someone else. If the verb doesn’t have ‘that’ after it in the table, you can’t use it to introduce speech or ideas. For example:

Brown (1985: 176) **describes that** children who watch a great deal of televised violence could be affected for many years.

This sentence doesn’t make grammatical sense because the verb ‘describes’ can’t project speech or ideas using ‘that’. The meaning would be better expressed by one of the following revised sentences:

Brown (1985: 176) **says that** children who watch a great deal of televised violence could be affected for many years.

OR

Brown (1985: 176) **describes** the long-term impact of televised violence on children who are exposed to it in high levels.

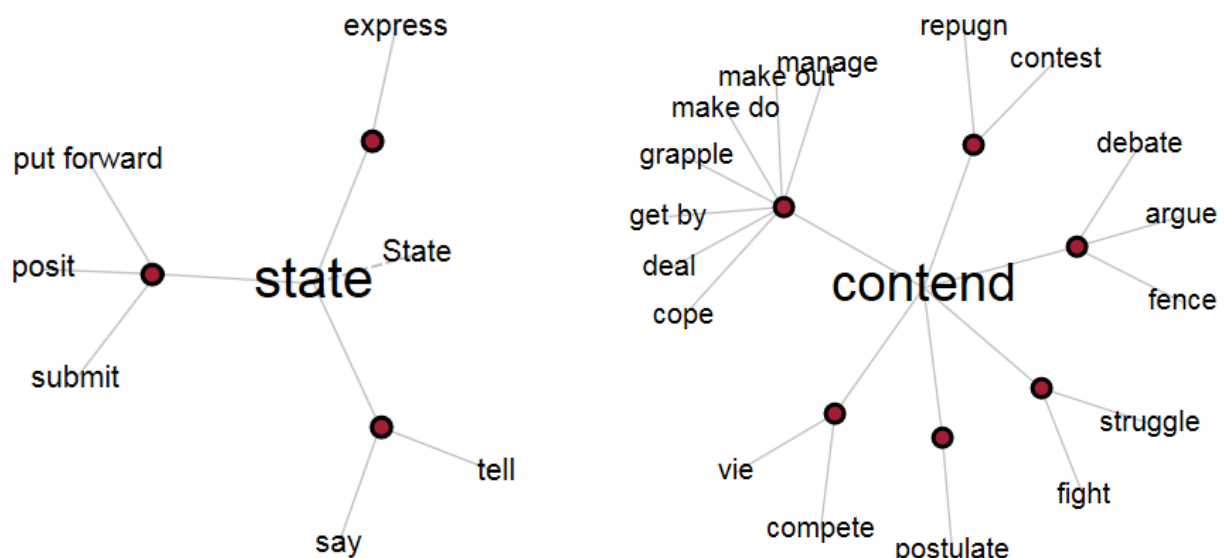
Common verbs to introduce quotations or ideas

adds (that)	contends (that)	elaborates (on X)	predicts (that)
affirms (that)	contests (that)	emphasises (that)	puts forward (the claim/idea that)
agrees (that)	counters (that)	highlights (that)	questions (the claim/idea that)
argues (that)	demonstrates (that)	illustrates (X)	reasons (that)
claims (that)	describes (X as)	implies (that)	rejects (the claim/idea that)
clarifies (that)	disagrees (that)	justifies (X)	remarks (that)
confirms (that)	disputes (that)	observes (that)	theorises (that)

(Adapted from Inglis, 2007, p. 231)

Please note that the words in the table above don’t all mean the same thing, so this list shouldn’t be treated like a ‘lucky dip’ where you choose one for the first quotation, and the next one for the next quotation, and so on.

If you’re not sure what the exact meaning of the term is, use a dictionary to check before using it. The [visual thesaurus](#) (free for limited use) can also be helpful for this because it displays the word’s relationships to other words. You can get a feel for the kind of company the word keeps, as shown below for the verbs ‘state’ and ‘contend’.



There are also many phrases that you can use to introduce quotations or paraphrased ideas, as shown in the table below.

As with the verbs listed before, don't treat this list like a 'lucky dip'. Be thoughtful about choosing an appropriate expression that fits into your argument.

Common phrases to introduce quotations:

According to X ...	X has expressed a similar view ...
X comments that ...	X feels/believes/maintains that ...
Reference to x reveals that ...	X claims/insists that ...
As X has indicated ...	The work of X asserts that ...
X notes/stresses/emphasises that ...	X warns/challenges that ...
As X points out ...	X criticises Y ...
X has drawn attention to the fact that ...	X is convinced that ...
Research by X suggests that...	In a study, X found that...
X's study into Y recommends that...	A study by X indicates/shows that...
X proposes/advises/urges that...	In his/her analysis, X reveals that...

(Adapted from Inglis, 2007, p. 231)

Try it yourself



The **Clarity English** module 'Study Skills for Success' has an online tutorial on 'Vocabulary' that you can work through at your own pace, with practice examples and quizzes. You can find Clarity English under 'C' in the Library's **e-Resources**, and **log in** (PDF, 45 Kb) using your Western ID.

References

Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes: A multidisciplinary approach*.

Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Inglis, M. (2007). *Unistep. Academic skills guide*. (4th ed.). Sydney, Australia.

Parrott, M. (2000). *Grammar for English language teachers*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.