

What are academic Verbs, exactly?

First, let's consider: What is a verb?

A verb is the action word in the sentence. For example:
She **completed** the assignment on time (completed is the verb)



Additionally, a verb is used to show the existence or occurrence of something. For example:
He **was** on time (was is the verb)

Academic verbs are more formal than the kind of verbs that you use in interpersonal communication. If you are not certain if your verbs are academic (or not), there is a list below that you can use in your papers. Try to use a variety of these verbs in your assignments.

Example:

Killeen (2001) **found** that “Socialization to professional nursing is an interactive process that begins in the educational setting and continues throughout one’s nursing career” (p. 46).

The most common verbs used in academic writing

analyze	assess	approach	assume	contract
create	define	derive	distribute	establish
estimate	function	identify	indicate	interpret
involve	legislate	occur	process	require
respond	achieve	administer	affect	assist
categorize	conclude	conduct	construct	consume
evaluate	focus	invest	maintain	obtain
participate	perceive	purchase	regulate	restrict
seek	select	survey	transfer	alternate
compensate	consent	constrain	contribute	coordinate
deduct	demonstrate	document	emphasize	exclude
fund	illustrate	imply	interact	justify
link	locate	publish	react	rely
remove	validate	specify	access	attribute
commit	communicate	contrast	emerge	grant
implement	impose	integrate	investigate	occupy
predict	promote	resolve	retain	adjust
alter	amend	challenge	compound	consult
contact	decline	enable	enforce	entitle
evolve	expand	expose	facilitate	generate
modify	monitor	orientate	pursue	stabilize
substitute	target	acknowledge	allocate	assign
cooperate	exceed	inhibit	precede	reveal
adapt	advocate	aid	channel	classify
comprehend	comprise	confirm	convert	differentiate
eliminate	insert	intervene	isolate	prioritize

Created by Cosette Taylor, Communications/EAL Instructor for the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba, cosette_taylor@umanitoba.ca

prohibit	publish	reverse	submit	survive
chart	clarify	contradict	detect	deviate
explore	guide	reinforce	restore	accommodate
anticipate	attain	confine	diminish	refine
found	claim	argue	state	indicate

As adapted from Coxhead, 2000.

Other Important Ideas about Verbs

Avoid Using Phrasal verbs

Academic writing does not normally include phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs are made up of a verb (ex: go, walk, went, take) and preposition(s) (ex: as, at, in, on, off, toward, out, by). Together the verb and the preposition(s) create a phrase with *a new meaning*. Here are just a few examples of phrasal verbs. Again, these informal phrasal verbs *should be avoided* in academic writing:

Poor: The patient told her husband to **get out of** the room.

Better: The patient told her husband to **leave** the room.

Poor: The nurse **gave out** the medications each morning.

Better: The nurse **distributed** the medications each morning.

Poor: The mother said she could not **put up with** her child's unpredictable behaviour.

Better: The mother said she could not **manage** her child's unpredictable behaviour.

Poor: My client **brought up** her lunch shortly after she ate.

Better: My client **vomited** shortly after she had eaten her lunch.

No Contractions

You should also avoid using contractions:

Instead of the informal	Change to the more formal
can't	cannot
won't	will not
it's	it is
he'll	he will
don't	do not
isn't	is not