

## Active Verbs in Academic Writing

While academic writing is often considered dry and lifeless, this doesn't necessarily need to be the case. Just as a story benefits from engaging, dynamic verbs that keep the plot moving, academic writers can also utilize active verbs to help animate their ideas, analysis, connections, and critiques. The table below recommends useful, guiding, demonstrative verbs common to strong academic texts.

The list below is not exhaustive. You will likely encounter similar kinds of verbs as you read academic texts, and you should feel free to add to each list as you notice active verbs that successfully show the reader the kind of action the author is taking. As you become familiar with these words, you can use them effectively in your writing, modelling your writing style on the successful moves you see in the works of other academic writers.

Important: The words in each list are not merely synonyms of one another, and there are often degrees of difference in their meaning. You must ensure you select the appropriate one for your own context, and you should not simply swap out one word for another, especially if you are not sure of how to use a particular word. Doing so can negatively impact the clarity of your writing, so practice looking up and then correctly using these terms to help expand your academic vocabulary.

<b>Showing Change or Difference</b>	<b><i>Increase:</i></b> broaden      enlarge      exceed      expand generate      improve      maximize      optimize			
	<b><i>Decrease:</i></b> decline      deteriorate      erode      minimize narrow      reduce      worsen			
	<b><i>Difference or Variation:</i></b> alter      contrast      convert      deviate differ      differentiate      distinguish      diverge evolve      modify      revise      transform			
<b>Showing Stability</b>	maintain      sustain			
<b>Remining within a Certain Range or Keeping Under a Certain Level</b>	confine      inhabit      prohibit      restrict			
<b>Showing In-Depth Study</b>	analyze      examine      investigate      observe explore      survey			

<b>Stating, Restating or Emphasizing Ideas/Concepts</b>	<b>Stating:</b> acknowledge    argue            articulate        assert attribute        claim            comment        propose establish        identify        mention        note observe         state
	<b>Restating:</b> elaborate        expand            reassert        reiterate restate
	<b>Emphasizing:</b> emphasize       highlight        stress
<b>Describing Phenomena or Data</b>	<b>Describing phenomena:</b> acquire            define            impact            signify symbolize
	<b>Describing data:</b> approximate      demonstrate      indicate level off            reflect            show
<b>Stating a Position</b>	<b>Positive:</b> advocate            assert            claim            hold the view that hypothesize        propose
	<b>Negative/Contradict:</b> deny                dispute            negate            reject
<b>Showing Uncertainty or an Extrapolation of Information</b>	<b>Showing uncertainty:</b> predict            speculate
	<b>Extrapolation of information:</b> deduce            imply            infer            project
<b>Showing Components</b>	comprise        consist            constitute        incorporate

References:

Nation, I. S. P. (1990). *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. New York: Newbury House.