

Lesson Plan: Academic Word List (AWL) vocabulary in context

Level	Advanced (C1–C2)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Vocabulary, reading, writing
Focus	Top AWL word families; collocation patterns; AWL in authentic academic texts

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand and use 30+ AWL words accurately in context
- Recognise AWL words in academic reading with speed and accuracy
- Use AWL vocabulary with correct collocation and word form
- Build a personal AWL vocabulary reference with examples

TARGET LANGUAGE & EXAMPLES

AWL Sublist 1 — the most frequent academic words

- analyse, approach, area, assess, assume, authority, available, benefit, concept, consist
- constitute, context, contract, create, data, define, derive, distribute, economy, environment

AWL words in academic sentence patterns

- analyse: The study analyses the relationship between X and Y.
- assess: We assessed the extent to which these findings are generalisable.
- constitute: These findings constitute evidence of a significant pattern.
- derive: Several conclusions can be derived from this data.
- assume: It is assumed that all participants gave informed consent.

AWL collocation patterns

- a significant / substantial / negligible difference
- to a large / limited / certain extent
- in the context of... / in this context...
- provide evidence / indicate a trend / support the hypothesis

Meaning & Nuance

AWL word	Academic use	Everyday equivalent	Example sentence
analyse	examine systematically	look at / study	The study analyses migration patterns.
assess	evaluate quality or extent	check / measure	We assessed the impact of the policy.
constitute	make up / form	make up / be	These events constitute a turning point.
assume	accept without proof	think / believe	It is assumed that income affects outcomes.

derive	obtain from a source	get / take from	The concept is derived from systems theory.
indicate	show or signal	show / suggest	The data indicates a strong correlation.

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up: AWL recognition test (10 min)

Task: Students read a short academic paragraph and underline AWL words they recognise.

- Count and compare in pairs.

→ Sets baseline and motivates for the lesson.

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: AWL sublist 1 with definitions, word families, and example sentences.

- Focus on collocations — how are these words typically used?
- Contrast with everyday equivalents to clarify register.

3. AWL cloze task (20 min)

Task: Academic text with 10 AWL words removed. Students complete it.

- Then compare with a partner: same choices? Discuss.

→ Builds inferencing skills in academic reading.

4. Academic paragraph writing (25 min)

Task: Write a 150-word paragraph using at least 8 AWL words.

- Peer review: correct form? Correct collocation? Appropriate register?

TEACHER NOTES

- The AWL covers ~10% of words in academic texts — teaching the top 570 word families has an enormous impact.
- Always teach word families alongside single words: analyse, analysis, analytical, analytically.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one or more:

1. Learn the complete word family for 10 AWL words and write a sentence for each form.
2. Read an academic abstract and identify every AWL word. Look up any you don't know.
3. Write an academic paragraph integrating 8 AWL words from different sublists.