



EXAM-RELEVANT VOCAB HITLIST (OC & SELECTIVE)

Words that actually show up in OC / Selective-style passages

Exam-Relevant Vocab Hitlist

(OC & Selective)

Words that actually show up in OC / Selective-style passages

Educational Resources

2024 Edition

© 2024. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

How to Use This Hitlist	4
Chapter 1: CORE 40 – High-Frequency "Exam Words"	5
Set A – Opinions, Attitudes & Tone	5
Set B – Cause, Effect & Contrast	7
Set C – Thinking & Argument	9
Set D – School, Pressure & Wellbeing	11
Chapter 2: EXTENSION 40 – Stretch Words	13
Set E – Subtle Feelings & Behaviour	13
Set F – Logical & Technical Connectors	15
Set G – Society, Environment & Ethics	17
Set H – Tricky "Exam Adjectives & Adverbs"	19
Chapter 3: Simple Practice Ideas	21
Conclusion	23

How to Use This Hitlist

These words are the kinds that appear again and again in:

- Reading comprehension passages
- Thinking skills questions and explanations
- Selective-style narratives, articles and arguments

They are not random dictionary words; they're "exam words" – ones that:

- change the meaning of a question
- reveal an author's opinion
- help answers go from "half-right" to "fully right"

Suggested use

- Start with the Core 40 (Set A–D).
- Then move into Extension 40 (Set E–H).

For each word:

- Read the student-friendly meaning.
- Read the exam-style sentence.
- Write one of your own sentences (or use the "New Word → New Sentence" drill).

CORE 40 – High-Frequency "Exam Words"

Set A – Opinions, Attitudes & Tone (10 words)

advantage

- something helpful or useful

One advantage of later school start times is that students are more alert in class.

disadvantage

- something that makes a situation worse

A major disadvantage of long homework is that it cuts into sleep time.

concerned

- worried or troubled about something

Teachers are concerned that many students are using their phones late at night.

critical

- (1) very important, or (2) negative and judging

Sleep is critical for memory.

The writer is critical of schools that focus only on test scores.

supportive

- helpful, encouraging

Her parents were supportive of her decision to repeat the year.

skeptical

- doubting; not easily convinced

The author is skeptical about whether technology improves learning.

enthusiastic

- very interested and excited

The students were enthusiastic about joining the new debate club.

reluctant

- not wanting to do something; hesitant

He was reluctant to move schools, even though it had better facilities.

biased

- showing unfair preference for one side

The article is biased towards private schools and ignores public successes.

neutral

- not supporting any side; balanced

The narrator remains neutral, presenting both arguments without pushing one.

Set B – Cause, Effect & Contrast (10 words)

cause

- make something happen

Lack of practice can cause students to freeze in exams.

result

- what happens because of something else

As a result, many students felt less pressure.

contribute

- help to make something happen

Regular reading can contribute to a wider vocabulary.

lead to

- to cause something to happen later

Constant comparison may lead to lower confidence.

despite

- even though

Despite the rain, the event continued as planned.

however

- but; introduces a contrast

The trial was successful; however, not all parents agreed.

therefore

- so; as a consequence

The bus broke down; therefore, students arrived late.

whereas

- while; shows difference between two things

Some students prefer strict rules, whereas others find them stressful.

nevertheless

- in spite of that, even so

The change was unpopular; nevertheless, it improved safety.

consequently

- as a result

He ignored the warnings; consequently, he failed the exam.

Set C – Thinking & Argument (10 words)

assume

- to take something as true without proof

We cannot assume that all students have internet at home.

justify

- to give reasons to support a decision or opinion

Can you justify why homework should be reduced?

evaluate

- judge the strengths and weaknesses

The question asks you to evaluate the advantages of sport at school.

imply

- suggest something without saying it directly

The writer implies that some rules are more about control than safety.

indicate

- show, point out

The results indicate that most students felt more confident.

interpret

- explain the meaning of

How would you interpret the author's final sentence?

perspective

- a point of view; how someone sees something

The story is told from the perspective of a younger sibling.

conclusion

- final judgement or decision based on information

The conclusion we can draw is that balance is important.

reliable

- can be trusted or depended on

Is this information reliable, or just someone's opinion online?

valid

- reasonable, based on good reasons or evidence

Some of the parents' concerns are valid, but others are exaggerated.

Set D – School, Pressure & Wellbeing (10 words)

pressure

- stress or force that makes you act in a certain way

There is a lot of pressure on students to achieve high marks.

expectation

- belief about how someone should behave or perform

His parents' expectations were high but supportive.

balance

- a healthy mix of different things

It is important to find a balance between study and rest.

wellbeing

- overall health and happiness

The school introduced programs to support student wellbeing.

competitive

- wanting to win or be the best

A competitive environment can motivate some students but overwhelm others.

consistent

- happening in the same way over time; steady

Her consistent effort led to slow but real improvement.

excessive

- too much

An excessive amount of homework can reduce family time.

efficient

- using time or resources well

Short, focused study can be more efficient than hours of distracted reading.

appropriate

- suitable in a particular situation

It is not appropriate to use phones during an exam.

privilege

- special advantage not everyone has

Attending a well-resourced school is a privilege, not a guarantee of success.

EXTENSION 40 – Stretch Words That Often Appear in Passages

Set E – Subtle Feelings & Behaviour (10 words)

resentful

- feeling angry because you think you were treated unfairly

He felt resentful that his effort went unnoticed.

sympathetic

- understanding and caring about someone's feelings

The teacher was sympathetic when she heard about the family issue.

hesitant

- slow to act because you are unsure

She was hesitant to raise her hand, even though she knew the answer.

indifferent

- not interested or caring

At first, he seemed indifferent to which school he attended.

defensive

- protecting yourself by reacting quickly and negatively

She became defensive when asked about her results.

generous

- willing to give more time or help than expected

The coach was generous with his time after training.

irritated

– slightly annoyed

The constant whispering behind him made him irritated.

ashamed

– feeling very embarrassed and guilty

He felt ashamed of how he had spoken to his friend.

determined

– having a strong decision not to give up

Despite the setback, she remained determined to improve.

resent

– verb form of resentful; to feel angry about

Some students resent being compared to their siblings.

Set F – Logical & Technical Connectors (10 words)

alternative

- another choice or option

An alternative to banning phones is storing them in lockers.

factor

- one of the things that influences a result

Sleep is a key factor in exam performance.

trend

- general direction or pattern over time

There is a trend towards more online learning.

priority

- something that is more important than other things

Student safety should be the school's first priority.

efficiently

- in a way that saves time or effort

She learned to study more efficiently by planning her tasks.

component

- part of something larger

Writing is only one component of the selective test.

influence

- affect; have an effect on someone's thoughts or actions

Friends can strongly influence a teenager's decisions.

justify

– (repeat from above) – appears so often it's worth revisiting

Can you justify your answer using the information in the passage?

potential

– possible ability or future success

Teachers saw great potential in her creative writing.

relevant

– connected to the topic

Only relevant information should be included in your answer.

Set G – Society, Environment & Ethics (10 words)

impact

- strong effect

The change had a positive impact on students' wellbeing.

sustainable

- able to continue without causing damage or running out of resources

The school introduced more sustainable practices in the canteen.

responsibility

- duty; something you are expected to do

It is our responsibility to clean up after ourselves.

consequence

- something that happens because of an action

One consequence of littering is harm to wildlife.

inequality

- unfair difference between groups

The article discusses inequality between schools in different areas.

awareness

- knowing that something exists and understanding it

Raising awareness about bullying can encourage students to speak up.

initiative

- ability to act without being told; a new plan

The student-led recycling initiative reduced waste at school.

controversial

- causing disagreement or argument

Banning homework is a controversial idea among teachers.

ethics

- ideas of what is right and wrong behaviour

The passage raises questions about the ethics of using student data.

Set H – Tricky "Exam Adjectives & Adverbs" (10 words)

significantly

- in an important or noticeable way

Results significantly improved after students began sleeping earlier.

gradually

- slowly, step by step

The school gradually introduced the new policy over a term.

rarely

- not often

Teachers rarely see how late students stay up studying.

frequently

- often

The author frequently uses statistics to support their argument.

partially

- partly, not completely

The plan was only partially successful in reducing stress.

deliberate

- done on purpose, not by accident

The use of a child narrator is a deliberate choice by the author.

inevitable

- certain to happen, unavoidable

With poor planning, last-minute stress becomes inevitable.

temporary

– not lasting; for a short time

The extra homework was a temporary measure before the exam.

permanent

– lasting forever or for a long time

Suspension should not be a permanent label on a student.

subtle

– not obvious; delicate, fine difference

There is a subtle change in tone when the writer mentions parents.

Simple Practice Ideas (So This Isn't Just Another List)

Option A – Hitlist Rotation (10–15 minutes/day)

- Day 1: Words 1–10
- Day 2: Words 11–20
- ... and so on.

For each word:

- Student says the meaning.
- Student reads the sentence.
- Student writes one original sentence (or chooses 3 words to use in a mini-paragraph).

Option B – "Spot the Word" in Passages

When doing reading practice:

- Ask the child to underline any word from the hitlist they see.
- Pause to ask: "How is this word used here? What does it tell us about the author's opinion or the situation?"

Option C – Writing Targets

Before a narrative or persuasive piece:

- Choose 3–5 words from the hitlist.
- Write them at the top of the page as a target vocab list.
- Student must use them correctly in their writing.

Conclusion

Mastering these 80 carefully selected vocabulary words will give you a significant advantage in OC and Selective examinations. These aren't just random dictionary entries – they're the precise words that appear repeatedly in exam passages, questions, and high-scoring responses.

Remember that vocabulary mastery is not about memorising definitions. It's about understanding how these words work in context, how they shape meaning, and how they can elevate your own writing and comprehension.

The key to success is consistent, focused practice. Use the rotation system, spot these words in your reading, and challenge yourself to incorporate them naturally into your writing. Each word you master brings you closer to exam confidence and academic excellence.

Your vocabulary is your toolkit for academic success. Make it sharp, make it precise, and make it work for you.

Good luck with your preparation!