

VOCABULARY BUILDER · IELTS

Education

23 high-band words to read, understand,
and actually use – from B2 to C2.

B2

C1

C2

How to use this pack

A word you can only recognise is not yet a word you own. This pack is built to move each term from “I’ve seen it” to “I can use it under exam pressure.” Work through it in order.

1 Test yourself first

Go straight to the **Before** page and write what you think each word means. Don’t look ahead — this is your baseline.

2 Study the word bank

Read each entry: the definition, the example sentence, the collocations and the word family. The example is the most important part — it shows the word alive in context.

3 Do the tasks

Gap-fill, matching, word formation, a full IELTS-style reading, and speaking & writing practice. Use a pencil so you can redo them.

4 Test yourself again

Return to the **After** page and write the meanings from memory. Compare with your baseline — that gap is your progress.

HOW TO READ AN ENTRY

noun / verb / adjective

part of speech

B2 · C1 · C2

CEFR difficulty level

/ˈsɪmbəl/

pronunciation (IPA)

e.g.

example sentence in context

↔

opposite / contrast

What do you already know?

BEFORE

Before you read a single definition, write what you think each word means — even a rough guess or a synonym. Tick how sure you are. This is your honest starting point; you'll come back at the end to measure how far you've moved.

#	WORD	SURE? know · unsure · new	WHAT I THINK IT MEANS
1	pedagogy	☐ ☐ ☐	
2	curriculum	☐ ☐ ☐	
3	rote learning	☐ ☐ ☐	
4	holistic	☐ ☐ ☐	
5	cognitive	☐ ☐ ☐	
6	literacy	☐ ☐ ☐	
7	numeracy	☐ ☐ ☐	
8	vocational	☐ ☐ ☐	
9	meritocracy	☐ ☐ ☐	
10	autonomy	☐ ☐ ☐	
11	aptitude	☐ ☐ ☐	
12	assessment	☐ ☐ ☐	
13	facilitate	☐ ☐ ☐	
14	truancy	☐ ☐ ☐	
15	plagiarism	☐ ☐ ☐	
16	remedial	☐ ☐ ☐	
17	prestigious	☐ ☐ ☐	
18	comprehensive	☐ ☐ ☐	
19	immersion	☐ ☐ ☐	
20	subsidise	☐ ☐ ☐	
21	inclusive	☐ ☐ ☐	
22	rigorous	☐ ☐ ☐	
23	tuition	☐ ☐ ☐	

The word bank

Twenty-three words, chosen for how often they earn marks in IELTS Writing Task 2 and Speaking Part 3. Read the example sentence aloud – that is where the meaning sticks.

1 pedagogy /ˈpedəɡɒdʒi/

noun

C2

The method and practice of teaching, especially as a subject of study.

e.g. Modern **pedagogy** places far greater emphasis on active learning than on passive memorisation.

COLLOCATIONS

modern / traditional pedagogy • a shift in pedagogy

WORD FAMILY

pedagogical (adj), pedagogue (n)

IELTS Use it to sound academic in essays about teaching methods rather than repeating “teaching”.

2 curriculum /kəˈrɪkjələm/

noun

B2

The subjects and content that make up a course of study at a school or university. (plural: curricula)

e.g. Critics argue that the national **curriculum** is too rigid to reflect students’ individual interests.

COLLOCATIONS

national / core / hidden curriculum • curriculum design

WORD FAMILY

curricular (adj), extracurricular (adj)

3 rote learning /rəʊt/

noun

C1

Learning something by repeating it until you remember it, rather than by understanding it.

e.g. Relying on **rote learning** may help students pass exams, but it rarely builds real understanding.

COLLOCATIONS

learn by rote • rote memorisation

WORD FAMILY

rote (n, usually in “by rote”)

IELTS A perfect essay contrast: “rote learning vs. critical thinking”.

4 **holistic** /həʊˈlɪstɪk/

adjective

C1

Dealing with the whole of something or someone, not just one part.

e.g. A **holistic** approach to education nurtures emotional and social skills alongside academic ability.

COLLOCATIONS

a holistic approach / view • holistic development

WORD FAMILY

holistically (adv)

5 **cognitive** /ˈkɒɡnətɪv/

adjective

C1

Connected with thinking, understanding, learning and remembering.

e.g. Bilingual children often show stronger **cognitive** flexibility than their monolingual peers.

COLLOCATIONS

cognitive ability / development • cognitive skills

WORD FAMILY

cognition (n), cognitively (adv)

6 **literacy** /ˈlɪtərəsi/

noun

B2

The ability to read and write; also competence in a particular area (e.g. digital literacy).

e.g. Raising adult **literacy** rates is a priority for many developing nations.

COLLOCATIONS

literacy rate / skills • digital / financial literacy

WORD FAMILY

literate (adj) • opp. illiterate (adj)

7 numeracy /'nju:mərəsi/

noun

C1

The ability to understand and work with numbers.

e.g. Employers increasingly expect a solid level of **numeracy**, even in non-technical roles.

COLLOCATIONS

basic / functional numeracy • literacy and numeracy

WORD FAMILY

numerate (adj) • opp. innumerate

8 vocational /vəʊ'keɪʃən/

adjective

C1

Relating to the skills and training needed for a particular job or occupation.

e.g. **Vocational** courses offer a practical alternative to a purely academic university degree.

COLLOCATIONS

vocational training / education • vocational qualification

WORD FAMILY

vocation (n), vocationally (adv)

9 meritocracy /,merɪ'tɒkrəsi/

noun

C2

A system in which people succeed because of their ability and effort, not their wealth or class.

e.g. Supporters of standardised testing claim it makes university admission more of a **meritocracy**.

COLLOCATIONS

a true / pure meritocracy • based on merit

WORD FAMILY

meritocratic (adj), merit (n)

IELTS Strong for “fairness in education” essays – pairs well with “equal opportunity”.

10 autonomy /ɔːˈtɒnəmi/

noun

C1

The freedom to make your own decisions and act independently.

e.g. Giving learners greater **autonomy** over what and how they study can sharply increase motivation.

COLLOCATIONS

learner / student autonomy • grant / give autonomy

WORD FAMILY

autonomous (adj), autonomously (adv)

11 aptitude /ˈæptɪtjuːd/

noun

C1

A natural ability or talent for doing something.

e.g. The test measures a candidate's **aptitude** for problem-solving rather than memorised knowledge.

COLLOCATIONS

an aptitude for (sth) • aptitude test • natural aptitude

WORD FAMILY

apt (adj)

12 assessment /əˈsesmənt/

noun

B2

The process of judging or measuring the quality, ability or progress of someone or something.

e.g. Continuous **assessment** reduces the pressure of a single, high-stakes final exam.

COLLOCATIONS

continuous / formative assessment • assessment criteria

WORD FAMILY

assess (v), assessor (n)

13 facilitate /fə'sɪlɪteɪt/

verb

C1

To make an action or process easier, or help it to happen.

e.g. Small class sizes **facilitate** more meaningful interaction between teachers and students.

COLLOCATIONS

facilitate learning / communication • facilitate access

WORD FAMILY

facilitator (n), facilitation (n)

IELTS A cleaner, higher-band alternative to "help" or "make easier".

14 truancy /'tru:ənsi/

noun

C1

The practice of staying away from school without permission or a good reason.

e.g. Schools in deprived areas often struggle with high rates of **truancy**.

COLLOCATIONS

high / persistent truancy • tackle truancy • play truant

WORD FAMILY

truant (n / adj / v)

15 plagiarism /'pleɪdʒərɪzəm/

noun

C1

Copying another person's ideas, words or work and presenting them as your own.

e.g. Universities now use sophisticated software to detect **plagiarism** in students' essays.

COLLOCATIONS

commit / detect plagiarism • a case of plagiarism

WORD FAMILY

plagiarise (v), plagiarist (n)

16 remedial /rɪ'mi:diəl/

adjective

C1

Intended to help students who are struggling, in order to improve their skills.

e.g. Learners who fall behind are offered **remedial** classes to help them catch up.

COLLOCATIONS

remedial classes / teaching • remedial support

WORD FAMILY

remedy (n / v)

17 prestigious /pre'stɪdʒəs/

adjective

C1

Respected and admired, usually because of being important or of high quality.

e.g. Competition for places at the country's most **prestigious** universities is fierce.

COLLOCATIONS

a prestigious institution / award • a prestigious degree

WORD FAMILY

prestige (n)

18 comprehensive /,kɒmpri'hensɪv/

adjective

C1

Complete; including all, or nearly all, of the relevant details or elements.

e.g. The programme offers a **comprehensive** introduction to academic writing.

COLLOCATIONS

a comprehensive overview / review • comprehensive education

WORD FAMILY

comprehensively (adv)

IELTS Note: in the UK a "comprehensive school" is a state school for all abilities — watch the double meaning.

19 immersion /ɪ'mɜːʃn/

noun

C1

Learning a language by using it constantly in real situations; being deeply involved in something.

e.g. Language **immersion**, where lessons are taught entirely in the target language, accelerates fluency.

COLLOCATIONS

language immersion • full / total immersion

WORD FAMILY

immerse (v), immersive (adj)

20 subsidise /'sʌbsɪdaɪz/

verb

C1

To pay part of the cost of something so that it is cheaper for people to use. (US: subsidize)

e.g. When governments **subsidise** higher education, more students from low-income families can attend.

COLLOCATIONS

subsidise fees / tuition • state-subsidised

WORD FAMILY

subsidy (n), subsidised (adj)

21 inclusive /ɪn'kluːsɪv/

adjective

B2

Deliberately including people who might otherwise be left out, such as those with disabilities.

e.g. An **inclusive** classroom adapts its methods so that every learner can take part.

COLLOCATIONS

inclusive education / classroom • an inclusive society

WORD FAMILY

inclusion (n), inclusivity (n), include (v)

22 rigorous /'rɪɡərəs/

adjective

C1

Extremely thorough, careful and demanding; done with great attention to detail.

e.g. The course is academically **rigorous** and demands several hours of independent study a day.

COLLOCATIONS

rigorous training / testing • academically rigorous

WORD FAMILY

rigour (n), rigorously (adv)

23 tuition /tjuˈɪʃn/

noun

B2

Teaching, especially of one person or a small group; also the fee paid for teaching.

e.g. Many students rely on private **tuition** to prepare for competitive entrance exams.

COLLOCATIONS

private / one-to-one tuition • tuition fees

WORD FAMILY

tutor (n / v), tutorial (n)

Task 1 · Gap-fill

Complete each sentence with a word from the bank. You may need to change the form (tense, ending). Each word is used once.

aptitude

assessment

facilitate

holistic

immersion

plagiarism

prestigious

remedial

rote

subsidise

truancy

vocational

1. The government decided to _____ university fees for students from low-income backgrounds.
2. A truly _____ approach to education develops the whole child, not just exam results.
3. Learning long lists of words by _____ often leads to rapid forgetting.
4. She has a remarkable _____ for languages, picking up new ones with ease.
5. To combat _____, some schools now text parents the moment a child fails to arrive.
6. Continuous _____ across the year is fairer than judging students on one final exam.
7. Small seminar groups _____ the kind of debate that large lectures cannot.
8. The university's _____ reputation attracts talented students from across the world.
9. Students caught committing _____ may fail the entire module.
10. Total _____ in a foreign country is one of the fastest ways to become fluent.
11. Children who fall behind in maths are given _____ lessons to rebuild the basics.
12. Many educators argue that _____ courses deserve the same respect as academic degrees.

Task 2 · Match the meaning

Write the letter of the correct definition next to each word.

1 pedagogy	☐	a the freedom to make your own decisions
2 curriculum	☐	b the set of subjects taught in a course
3 cognitive	☐	c thorough, demanding and precise
4 meritocracy	☐	d the theory and method of teaching
5 autonomy	☐	e teaching, or the fee paid for it
6 comprehensive	☐	f relating to thinking, learning and remembering
7 inclusive	☐	g including everyone, especially those often left out
8 rigorous	☐	h a system where success comes from ability and effort
9 numeracy	☐	i the ability to work with numbers
10 tuition	☐	j complete; covering everything

Task 3 · Word formation

Change the word in **CAPITALS** into the correct form to complete each sentence.

1. **LITERATE** Higher levels of _____ are closely linked to better job prospects.
2. **ASSESS** The _____ criteria are shared with students at the start of the course.
3. **PRESTIGE** She was offered a place at a highly _____ institution.
4. **AUTONOMY** The strongest students are able to work _____ with little supervision.
5. **FACILITATE** A skilled _____ guides the discussion without dominating it.
6. **RIGOUR** Every exam script is marked _____ and consistently.
7. **INCLUDE** Schools now have a legal duty to promote _____ for all learners.
8. **COGNITION** Early education lays the foundation for later _____ growth.

Task 4 · Reading in context

Read the passage, then answer the questions. This mirrors an IELTS reading set – notice how many of your new words appear naturally.

Rethinking the Classroom

For much of the twentieth century, schooling revolved around a simple idea: a teacher delivered facts, and students memorised them. This traditional pedagogy, built on rote learning, produced pupils who could recite information but often could not apply it. In recent decades, educators have begun to question whether such methods truly prepare young people for adult life.

A growing number of schools now favour a more holistic model. Rather than treating children as containers to be filled, they aim to build cognitive skills such as reasoning and problem-solving, while giving learners greater autonomy over their own study. Assessment is changing too. Instead of relying on a single, high-stakes examination, many institutions now spread evaluation across the whole year, arguing that this gives a fairer and more accurate picture of ability.

Reformers also point to fairness. If education is meant to be a meritocracy, they argue, then a rigid curriculum that suits only academic learners is a serious problem. Expanding vocational routes and offering subsidised places to poorer families, they claim, makes the system more inclusive.

Critics counter that these changes risk lowering standards. A rigorous education, they insist, still demands hard work, discipline and the mastery of core knowledge – qualities that no amount of reform should be allowed to erode.

Questions 1–5 · True / False / Not Given

TRUE = the passage says so. **FALSE** = the passage says the opposite. **NOT GIVEN** = the passage doesn't say.

- | | | |
|----------|--|-------------------|
| 1 | Traditional teaching methods helped students apply knowledge to new situations. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 2 | Some schools now assess students throughout the year instead of with one exam. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3 | Most parents prefer the older, exam-based system. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 4 | Supporters of reform believe expanding vocational routes makes education fairer. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 5 | Critics claim that recent reforms have already lowered university standards. | T / F / NG |

Questions 6–9 · Vocabulary in context

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------|
| 6 | Find a word/phrase meaning: a system in which success depends on ability and effort | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 7 | Find a word/phrase meaning: the freedom to make your own choices | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 8 | Find a word/phrase meaning: thorough and demanding | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 9 | Find a word/phrase meaning: learning by repetition without real understanding | _____ |

Task 5 · Use it yourself

Recognising a word is easy; producing it is what raises your band. Answer out loud, then in writing.

SPEAK Speaking — Part 3 style

Answer each question in 3–4 sentences. Try to use the words in **bold** accurately.

1. Do you think schools rely too much on **rote learning**? What are the alternatives?
2. Should governments **subsidise** university **tuition**? Why or why not?
3. How can teachers give students more **autonomy** without losing discipline?
4. Is a **vocational** qualification as valuable as an academic degree in your country?

WRITE Writing — Task 2 mini

Write an introduction and one body paragraph (about 80–100 words) for this prompt. Use **at least four** words from this pack.

Some people believe that a **rigorous**, exam-based system is the fairest way to run education. Others argue that a more **holistic** approach is better. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.

Now, from memory

AFTER

Cover the word bank. Write each meaning from memory and tick the box only if you could also use the word in your own sentence. Compare this page with your **Before** page – every word you can now explain is a mark you've earned.

#	WORD	MEANING (FROM MEMORY)	CAN USE IT
1	pedagogy		☐
2	curriculum		☐
3	rote learning		☐
4	holistic		☐
5	cognitive		☐
6	literacy		☐
7	numeracy		☐
8	vocational		☐
9	meritocracy		☐
10	autonomy		☐
11	aptitude		☐
12	assessment		☐
13	facilitate		☐
14	truancy		☐
15	plagiarism		☐
16	remedial		☐
17	prestigious		☐
18	comprehensive		☐
19	immersion		☐
20	subsidise		☐
21	inclusive		☐
22	rigorous		☐
23	tuition		☐

Answer key

TASK 1 · GAP-FILL

1 subsidise 2 holistic 3 rote 4 aptitude 5 truancy 6 assessment 7 facilitate 8 prestigious 9 plagiarism
10 immersion 11 remedial 12 vocational

TASK 2 · MATCHING

1 d 2 b 3 f 4 h 5 a 6 j 7 g 8 c 9 i 10 e

TASK 3 · WORD FORMATION

1 literacy 2 assessment 3 prestigious 4 autonomously 5 facilitator 6 rigorously 7 inclusion 8 cognitive

TASK 4 · TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN

1 FALSE 2 TRUE 3 NOT GIVEN 4 TRUE 5 NOT GIVEN

TASK 4 · VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

6 meritocracy 7 autonomy 8 rigorous 9 rote learning

 **Nicely done.** Revisit this pack in a week and again in a month — spaced review is what turns a recognised word into an automatic one. More themed packs at prepex.ai.