

VOCABULARY BUILDER · IELTS

History

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	heritage	☐ ☐ ☐	
2	preservation	☐ ☐ ☐	
3	artefact	☐ ☐ ☐	
4	civilisation	☐ ☐ ☐	
5	monument	☐ ☐ ☐	
6	restore	☐ ☐ ☐	
7	archaeology	☐ ☐ ☐	
8	excavate	☐ ☐ ☐	
9	relic	☐ ☐ ☐	
10	ancestor	☐ ☐ ☐	
11	dynasty	☐ ☐ ☐	
12	empire	☐ ☐ ☐	
13	colonial	☐ ☐ ☐	
14	revolution	☐ ☐ ☐	
15	decline	☐ ☐ ☐	
16	legacy	☐ ☐ ☐	
17	era	☐ ☐ ☐	
18	commemorate	☐ ☐ ☐	
19	antiquity	☐ ☐ ☐	
20	indigenous	☐ ☐ ☐	
21	demolish	☐ ☐ ☐	
22	ruins	☐ ☐ ☐	
23	chronicle	☐ ☐ ☐	

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 heritage /'herɪtɪdʒ/

noun

B2

The buildings, traditions, objects and culture a society has inherited from the past and values.

e.g. Many argue that governments have a duty to protect the nation's cultural **heritage** for future generations.

COLLOCATIONS

cultural / national heritage • a heritage site

WORD FAMILY

heritable (adj)

IELTS The single most useful word for “preserving the past” essays – e.g. “cultural heritage”, “heritage site”.

2 preservation /,prezə'veɪʃn/

noun

C1

The act of protecting something so that it stays in its original condition.

e.g. The **preservation** of historic city centres often clashes with the demand for new housing.

COLLOCATIONS

the preservation of • historic preservation

WORD FAMILY

preserve (v), preserved (adj)

IELTS Contrast it with “demolition” and “development” to build a balanced argument.

3 artefact /'ɑ:tɪfækt/

noun

C1

An object made by a human, especially one of historical or cultural interest. (US: artifact)

e.g. The museum returned several ancient **artefacts** to the country they were taken from.

COLLOCATIONS

an ancient / cultural artefact • display artefacts

WORD FAMILY

—

4 civilisation /ˌsɪvəlaɪˈzeɪʃn/

noun

B2

An advanced and organised human society, usually of a particular time or place. (US: civilization)

e.g. The ruins reveal how sophisticated this ancient **civilisation** truly was.

COLLOCATIONS

an ancient civilisation • the rise / fall of a civilisation

WORD FAMILY

civilise (v), civilised (adj)

5 monument /ˈmɒnjumənt/

noun

B2

A structure, statue or building put up to remember a person or event, or for its historic value.

e.g. The government has listed the bridge as a protected **monument**.

COLLOCATIONS

a historic / national monument • erect a monument

WORD FAMILY

monumental (adj)

6 restore /rɪˈstɔː/

verb

B2

To repair something old or damaged so that it looks as it originally did.

e.g. Skilled craftsmen spent years **restoring** the cathedral to its former glory.

COLLOCATIONS

restore a building / painting • carefully restored

WORD FAMILY

restoration (n)

IELTS “Restore” (repair to original) is not “renovate” (modernise) – the precision impresses examiners.

7 archaeology /,ɑːkiˈɒlədʒi/

noun

C1

The study of human history through the excavation and analysis of physical remains.

e.g. Advances in **archaeology** let us date sites far more accurately than before.

COLLOCATIONS

study archaeology • the field of archaeology

WORD FAMILY

archaeologist (n), archaeological (adj)

8 excavate /'ekskeɪt/

verb

C1

To dig carefully in the ground to uncover buried objects or remains from the past.

e.g. The team **excavated** the site for a decade before the tomb was finally found.

COLLOCATIONS

excavate a site / tomb

WORD FAMILY

excavation (n), excavator (n)

9 relic /'reɪlɪk/

noun

C1

An object or custom that has survived from an earlier time.

e.g. The sword is a rare **relic** of the medieval period.

COLLOCATIONS

a relic of the past • a religious relic

WORD FAMILY

—

10 ancestor /'ænsesə/

noun

B2

A person, especially one from long ago, from whom you are descended.

e.g. She traced her **ancestors** back to a village that no longer exists.

COLLOCATIONS

distant / common ancestors • our ancestors

WORD FAMILY

ancestry (n), ancestral (adj) • opp. descendant

11 dynasty /'dɪnəsti/

noun

C1

A series of rulers or leaders who all belong to the same family.

e.g. The **dynasty** ruled the region for almost four hundred years.

COLLOCATIONS

a ruling / imperial dynasty • found a dynasty

WORD FAMILY

dynastic (adj)

12 empire /'empaɪə/

noun

B2

A group of countries or peoples ruled over by a single powerful state or leader.

e.g. At its height, the **empire** stretched across three continents.

COLLOCATIONS

build / expand an empire • the fall of an empire

WORD FAMILY

imperial (adj), emperor (n)

13 colonial /kə'ləʊniəl/

adjective

C1

Relating to a country's control over other territories and their peoples.

e.g. Many modern borders were drawn during the **colonial** era, ignoring local communities.

COLLOCATIONS

colonial rule / power • the colonial period

WORD FAMILY

colony (n), colonise (v), colonialism (n)

14 revolution /ˌrevə'luːʃn/

noun

B2

The forcible overthrow of a government or social order; a complete and dramatic change.

e.g. The **revolution** swept away the old ruling class within a matter of weeks.

COLLOCATIONS

lead / spark a revolution • the industrial revolution

WORD FAMILY

revolutionary (adj/n), revolutionise (v)

15 decline /di'klaɪn/

noun

C1

A gradual and continuous loss of strength, power or quality.

e.g. Historians still debate the causes of the empire's slow **decline**.

COLLOCATIONS

a gradual / steady decline • the rise and decline of

WORD FAMILY

decline (v) • opp. rise

IELTS "The rise and decline of..." is a ready-made frame for history essays.

16 legacy /'legəsi/

noun

C1

Something handed down from the past, or the lasting effects of a person or event.

e.g. The empire left a lasting **legacy** in the region's language and law.

COLLOCATIONS

a lasting / enduring legacy • leave a legacy

WORD FAMILY

—

17 era /'ɪərə/

noun

B2

A long and distinct period of history with a particular character.

e.g. The invention of printing marked the beginning of a new **era**.

COLLOCATIONS

a new / bygone era • the Victorian era

WORD FAMILY

—

18 commemorate /kə'meməreɪt/

verb

C1

To honour and remember an important person or event, often with a ceremony or monument.

e.g. A statue was raised to **commemorate** those who died in the war.

COLLOCATIONS

commemorate an event / anniversary

WORD FAMILY

commemoration (n), commemorative (adj)

19 antiquity /æn'tɪkwəti/

noun

C2

The distant past, especially before the Middle Ages; also, great age.

e.g. These trade routes date back to **antiquity**.

COLLOCATIONS

classical antiquity • of great antiquity

WORD FAMILY

antique (adj/n), antiquated (adj)

20 indigenous /ɪn'dɪdʒənəs/

adjective

C1

Originating in and naturally belonging to a particular place; native.

e.g. Colonisation devastated many **indigenous** communities and their traditions.

COLLOCATIONS

indigenous people / culture • indigenous languages

WORD FAMILY

—

IELTS A precise, respectful alternative to “native”; strong in culture-and-identity essays.

21 demolish /dɪ'mɒlɪʃ/

verb

C1

To deliberately knock down or destroy a building or structure.

e.g. Campaigners fought to stop the developers from **demolishing** the old theatre.

COLLOCATIONS

demolish a building • be demolished

WORD FAMILY

demolition (n)

IELTS The natural opposite of “preserve / restore” — perfect for a two-sided argument.

22 ruins /'ru:ɪnz/

noun (pl.)

B2

The remaining parts of a building or place that has been badly damaged or destroyed over time.

e.g. Tourists flock to the **ruins** of the ancient temple every summer.

COLLOCATIONS

ancient / crumbling ruins • lie in ruins

WORD FAMILY

ruin (v/n), ruined (adj)

23 chronicle /'krɒnɪkl/

noun / verb

C1

(n) a written record of events in the order they happened; (v) to record events this way.

e.g. The diaries **chronicle** everyday life during a turbulent century.

COLLOCATIONS

a detailed chronicle • chronicle the events

WORD FAMILY

chronicler (n), chronological (adj)

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.

ancestor

commemorate

decline

demolish

excavate

heritage

indigenous

legacy

preservation

relic

restore

ruins

1. Campaigners are fighting a plan to _____ the town's oldest cinema.
2. The _____ of ancient manuscripts requires careful control of temperature and light.
3. Archaeologists began to _____ the site after farmers found bones in a field.
4. UNESCO adds sites of outstanding cultural value to its World _____ list.
5. It took decades to _____ the faded frescoes to their original colours.
6. The essay traces the gradual _____ of the once-mighty empire.
7. A national holiday was created to _____ the end of the war.
8. Many people today use DNA tests to learn about their distant _____.
9. Efforts are being made to protect the languages of _____ peoples.
10. The scientist's greatest _____ was the school she founded.
11. The rusted helmet is a _____ of a battle fought here centuries ago.
12. We spent the afternoon wandering through the _____ of the old castle.

Task 2 · Match the meaning

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

1 artefact	☐	a a line of rulers from the same family
2 civilisation	☐	b an advanced, organised human society
3 monument	☐	c the forcible overthrow of a government
4 archaeology	☐	d an object made by humans, of historical interest
5 dynasty	☐	e the distant, ancient past
6 empire	☐	f a structure built to remember a person or event
7 colonial	☐	g relating to control over other territories
8 revolution	☐	h the study of the past through physical remains
9 era	☐	i a long, distinct period of history
10 antiquity	☐	j a group of lands ruled by one state or leader

Task 3 · Word formation

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

- HISTORY** The building is of great _____ importance to the city.
- PRESERVE** The _____ of old buildings can be extremely expensive.
- REVOLUTION** The printing press was a truly _____ invention.
- EMPIRE** The country pursued an aggressive _____ policy for decades.
- ANCESTOR** The family returned to visit their _____ homeland.
- COLONY** The museum's new wing examines the country's _____ past.
- COMMEMORATE** A _____ plaque marks the spot where the treaty was signed.
- ARCHAEOLOGY** Several important _____ discoveries were made at the site.

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.

Whose Past Is It?

Every city carries the marks of its past, from grand monuments to crumbling ruins on its outskirts. As populations grow and land becomes scarce, societies increasingly face a difficult question: how much of that past should be preserved, and at what cost?

Supporters of preservation argue that historic buildings are an irreplaceable part of a nation's heritage. Once a structure is demolished, they point out, the craftsmanship and memory it embodies are lost forever. Restoring old sites can also bring practical benefits, attracting tourists and reminding citizens of the achievements of earlier generations. In many countries, museums now work to return artefacts to the descendants of the people who made them, acknowledging that a community's history belongs, above all, to that community.

Critics respond that preservation can be expensive and impractical. Money spent restoring a single monument, they argue, might do more good if it were invested in schools or housing. There is also the risk that a city becomes frozen in one era, unable to adapt to the needs of the present.

Most experts favour a balanced approach. Rather than choosing between the old and the new, cities can weave historic sites into modern life, honouring the legacy of the past while still building for the future. In this way, the achievements of a civilisation can be commemorated without holding a society back.

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 | Restoring historic sites can attract tourists. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 2 | All experts agree that preservation is a waste of money. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3 | Some museums have returned objects to the communities that created them. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 4 | Preserving old buildings always increases local house prices. | T / F / NG |
| <hr/> | | |
| 5 | The writer believes cities must choose between old buildings and new development. | T / F / NG |

Questions 6–9 · Vocabulary in context

- | | | |
|-------|---|-------|
| 6 | Find a word/phrase meaning: the traditions and objects a society inherits from the past | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 7 | Find a word/phrase meaning: to knock down a building deliberately | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 8 | Find a word/phrase meaning: the lasting effects handed down from the past | _____ |
| <hr/> | | |
| 9 | Find a word/phrase meaning: the remaining parts of a destroyed building | _____ |

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 it is important to **preserve** historic buildings? Why?
2. Should **artefacts** in foreign museums be returned to their country of origin?
3. What can we learn from studying the mistakes of past **civilisations**?
4. Is it worth spending public money to **restore** old **monuments**?

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 governments should spend money protecting and restoring historic buildings and **monuments**. Others think that money would be better spent on modern needs. 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	heritage		☐
2	preservation		☐
3	artefact		☐
4	civilisation		☐
5	monument		☐
6	restore		☐
7	archaeology		☐
8	excavate		☐
9	relic		☐
10	ancestor		☐
11	dynasty		☐
12	empire		☐
13	colonial		☐
14	revolution		☐
15	decline		☐
16	legacy		☐
17	era		☐
18	commemorate		☐
19	antiquity		☐
20	indigenous		☐
21	demolish		☐
22	ruins		☐
23	chronicle		☐

Answer key

TASK 1 · GAP-FILL

1 demolish 2 preservation 3 excavate 4 heritage 5 restore 6 decline 7 commemorate 8 ancestor 9 indigenous
10 legacy 11 relic 12 ruins

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 historical 2 preservation 3 revolutionary 4 imperial 5 ancestral 6 colonial 7 commemorative 8 archaeological

TASK 4 · TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN

1 TRUE 2 FALSE 3 TRUE 4 NOT GIVEN 5 FALSE

TASK 4 · VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

6 heritage 7 demolish 8 legacy 9 ruins



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.