ISEE Vocabulary Lists by Level (Lower, Middle, Upper)

This free, printable ISEE vocabulary list was compiled by ISEEPrep's teaching team. It gives 50 academic words for each of the Lower, Middle and Upper Levels, 150 words in all. Every word comes with its part of speech, a short plain-English definition and a common English synonym, plus a box to tick once the student knows it. It is a study list, not a list from E3n (formerly ERB), and it does not predict which words will appear on any test.

ISEE Verbal Reasoning has only two question types, synonyms and sentence completion, and both are built on vocabulary. This list gives 50 academic words that are common in written texts for each of the Lower, Middle and Upper Levels. Each word comes with its part of speech, a short English definition and a common English synonym, so that students can build and review vocabulary on a plan alongside their reading.

> This academic vocabulary study list was compiled by ISEEPrep's teaching team to match the difficulty of each test level; it is not a list from E3n (formerly ERB). No word list can predict which words will appear on a given test.

How to use these lists

- Cover the last three columns, define the word in your own words, then check against the definition and the synonym.
- Learn each word inside a sentence: write one of your own, or copy down the sentence where you met the word in your reading.
- Review in spaced rounds: look again at the words learned today after two or three days, and once more a week later.
- Tick the last column for each word whose meaning you can give accurately without looking; unticked words go into the next round of review.

Lower Level (applying to grades 5–6)

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
abundant	adj.	existing in large amounts	plentiful	
admire	v.	to think highly of someone	respect	
anxious	adj.	nervous about what might happen	worried	
assist	v.	to make a task easier for someone	help	
astonish	v.	to surprise someone very much	amaze	
boast	v.	to talk too proudly about yourself	brag	

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
burden	n.	something heavy or hard to carry	load	
cautious	adj.	avoiding risks; watching out for danger	careful	
cease	v.	to come to an end	stop	
conceal	v.	to keep out of sight	hide	
courage	n.	the strength to face fear or danger	bravery	
cunning	adj.	clever at tricking others	sly	
demolish	v.	to tear down completely	destroy	
dense	adj.	packed closely together	thick	
diligent	adj.	working with steady, careful effort	hardworking	
dispute	n.	a disagreement between people	argument	
enormous	adj.	very, very large	gigantic	
fatigue	n.	the feeling of being worn out	tiredness	
feeble	adj.	lacking strength	weak	
fragile	adj.	easily damaged or cracked	breakable	
genuine	adj.	truly what it seems to be	real	
glimpse	n.	a quick, brief look	glance	
grateful	adj.	appreciating a kindness or a gift	thankful	
hazard	n.	something that could cause harm	danger	
humble	adj.	not proud; not showing off	modest	
inquire	v.	to seek information by questioning	ask	
jubilant	adj.	extremely happy, often after a success	joyful	
loyal	adj.	staying true to a person or cause	faithful	
nimble	adj.	quick and light in movement	agile	
notion	n.	a thought or belief	idea	
obstacle	n.	something that blocks the way	barrier	
peculiar	adj.	odd or unusual	strange	
plead	v.	to ask urgently and with strong feeling	beg	
predict	v.	to say what will happen later	forecast	

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
prosper	v.	to grow and do well	thrive	
recall	v.	to bring back to mind	remember	
reluctant	adj.	not wanting to do something	unwilling	
remedy	n.	something that fixes a problem or illness	cure	
rigid	adj.	not able to bend or change	stiff	
scarce	adj.	hard to find; in short supply	rare	
seize	v.	to take hold of suddenly	grab	
summit	n.	the highest point of a mountain	peak	
swift	adj.	moving very quickly	fast	
timid	adj.	easily frightened; lacking confidence	shy	
tranquil	adj.	quiet and peaceful	calm	
vacant	adj.	with no one or nothing in it	empty	
vanish	v.	to go out of sight suddenly	disappear	
vast	adj.	very great in size or area	huge	
wander	v.	to walk around without a set path	roam	
weary	adj.	worn out and needing rest	tired	

Middle Level (applying to grades 7–8)

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
abolish	v.	to formally end a law or system	eliminate	
adequate	adj.	enough for what is needed	sufficient	
adversary	n.	a person you compete or fight against	opponent	
advocate	v.	to speak in favor of	support	
alleviate	v.	to make pain or trouble less severe	relieve	
ambiguous	adj.	having more than one possible meaning	unclear	
anecdote	n.	a short, interesting tale about a real event	story	

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
anticipate	v.	to think something will probably happen	expect	
arrogant	adj.	acting as if better than others	conceited	
benevolent	adj.	wishing good things for others	kind	
candid	adj.	honest and direct in speech	frank	
commend	v.	to say good things about someone's work	praise	
comply	v.	to follow a rule or request	obey	
concise	adj.	saying a lot in few words	brief	
consensus	n.	a view the whole group shares	agreement	
contradictory	adj.	stating opposite things that cannot both hold	inconsistent	
deceive	v.	to make someone believe something false	trick	
deplete	v.	to use up a supply	exhaust	
dilemma	n.	a hard choice between two options	predicament	
diminish	v.	to become or make smaller	decrease	
eloquent	adj.	speaking or writing in a clear, moving way	articulate	
emulate	v.	to try to be like someone admired	imitate	
fervent	adj.	showing very strong feeling	passionate	
futile	adj.	having no chance of success	useless	
hinder	v.	to hold back or slow down	obstruct	
hypothesis	n.	an idea that has not yet been tested	assumption	
impartial	adj.	treating all sides equally	fair	
indifferent	adj.	not caring either way	uninterested	
inevitable	adj.	certain to happen	unavoidable	
integrity	n.	sticking to strong moral principles	honesty	
mediocre	adj.	only ordinary; not very good	average	
meticulous	adj.	paying close attention to every detail	careful	

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
novice	n.	a person new to an activity	beginner	
obsolete	adj.	no longer in use; replaced by something newer	outdated	
ominous	adj.	suggesting that something bad will happen	threatening	
persevere	v.	to keep going despite difficulty	persist	
plausible	adj.	seeming reasonable or likely to be true	believable	
prevalent	adj.	common in many places	widespread	
prudent	adj.	showing good judgment; avoiding risk	sensible	
refute	v.	to prove a claim false with evidence	disprove	
reinforce	v.	to add support to; make firmer	strengthen	
remorse	n.	deep sorrow for a wrong you did	regret	
resilient	adj.	able to recover quickly from difficulty	tough	
scrutinize	v.	to look at very closely	examine	
skeptical	adj.	not easily convinced; questioning	doubtful	
tedious	adj.	long, dull and repetitive	boring	
verify	v.	to check that something is true	confirm	
versatile	adj.	useful in many ways or for many tasks	adaptable	
vigilant	adj.	alert and on the lookout for danger	watchful	
zeal	n.	great energy and eagerness for a cause	enthusiasm	

Upper Level (applying to grades 9–12)

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
aberration	n.	a break from what is normal or expected	deviation	
acquiesce	v.	to go along with something without protest	consent	
admonish	v.	to warn or scold firmly	reprimand	
ameliorate	v.	to make a bad situation better	improve	

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
antipathy	n.	a strong feeling of dislike	aversion	
apathy	n.	a lack of interest or concern	indifference	
arduous	adj.	needing great effort; very hard	strenuous	
belligerent	adj.	eager to fight or argue	hostile	
capricious	adj.	changing mood or mind suddenly	fickle	
censure	v.	to criticize strongly and formally	condemn	
complacent	adj.	too comfortable with success to see risks	self-satisfied	
corroborate	v.	to back up with more evidence	confirm	
cursory	adj.	quick and not thorough	superficial	
dearth	n.	a lack of something	shortage	
deference	n.	giving way politely to another person's wishes	respect	
deride	v.	to make fun of	mock	
disparage	v.	to talk about as having little value	belittle	
elucidate	v.	to explain so it is easy to understand	clarify	
enigma	n.	something hard to understand or explain	mystery	
ephemeral	adj.	lasting a very short time	fleeting	
equivocal	adj.	open to more than one meaning	ambiguous	
exacerbate	v.	to make a problem more severe	worsen	
gregarious	adj.	enjoying the company of others	sociable	
hackneyed	adj.	repeated so much it feels stale	overused	
impetuous	adj.	acting quickly without thinking	impulsive	
incessant	adj.	never stopping	constant	
indolent	adj.	avoiding work or effort	lazy	
innocuous	adj.	not likely to hurt or offend	harmless	
intrepid	adj.	bold in the face of danger	fearless	
laconic	adj.	using very few words	terse	

Word	Part of speech	Definition	Synonym	✓
lethargic	adj.	lacking energy; slow and drowsy	sluggish	
magnanimous	adj.	forgiving and big-hearted, even toward rivals	generous	
mitigate	v.	to reduce how harmful or severe something is	lessen	
mundane	adj.	ordinary and dull; everyday	commonplace	
obstinate	adj.	refusing to change one's mind	stubborn	
paradox	n.	a statement that seems impossible but holds true	contradiction	
placate	v.	to calm someone who is upset	soothe	
pragmatic	adj.	focused on what works in real life	practical	
predilection	n.	a special liking for something	preference	
proliferate	v.	to increase quickly in number	multiply	
repudiate	v.	to refuse to accept or support	reject	
reticent	adj.	keeping thoughts and feelings to oneself	reserved	
sporadic	adj.	happening now and then, not regularly	occasional	
superfluous	adj.	beyond what is required; extra	unnecessary	
tenacious	adj.	holding on firmly; not giving up	persistent	
ubiquitous	adj.	found everywhere	widespread	
undermine	v.	to damage slowly or in secret	weaken	
vex	v.	to irritate or trouble	annoy	
volatile	adj.	likely to change suddenly	unstable	
zenith	n.	the highest point of success	peak	

New words of your own (word, part of speech, meaning, example sentence)

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