AWL Highlighters

This Worksheet is for use with the **Academic Word List (AWL) Highlighters** video, available on YouTube and Youku.

Video name:	**Academic Word List (AWL) Highlighters**
Link to video:	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfZnqhynhsI
Alternate link:	http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUxOTczNjMxNg==.html

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Worksheet

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Task 1: Before watching

Answer the following questions *before* watching the video.

i) What does the word *academic* mean? _____

ii) Read the following sentences.

- Which words seem particularly suitable for *academic writing*?
- Which ones seem *non-academic*?

There are two significant reasons for this thing. The most notable is the decline in the amount of stuff that is sold. This has been really bad for merchants. A second reason is an increase in price, which has been bad for shoppers.

iii) For the words which seem non-academic, can you suggest better alternatives?

Task 2: About the AWL

1. What is the Academic Word List (AWL)? _____

_____

Complete the following table, giving information about the AWL and GSL.

Word List	**Abbreviation**	**% of words covered**
Academic Word List	AWL	**2.** _____
3. _____ **List**	GSL	**4.** _____

5. Based on the above information, what percentage of words in written English would a student know if they knew all GSL and AWL words? _____

6. How many sublists are there in the AWL? _____

7. What is the difference between sublist 1 and sublist 2? _____

_____

8. How many word *families* are there in the AWL? _____

9. The following words are the first words from the first three sublists. Which one is sublist 1, which is sublist 2, which is sublist 3?

___ *alternative* ___ *analyse* ___ *achieve*

Task 3: AWL highlighters

10. Why is the AWL highlighter an important tool for studying vocabulary? _____

_____

11. Complete the table to show whether the highlighter has this feature (✓) or not (×).

Feature [*Lex = Lextutor, Nott = Nottingham Uni, EAPF = EAPFoundation.com*]	**Lex**	**Nott**	**EAPF**
a) Highlights AWL words			
b) Has data e.g. % of AWL words in text			
c) Shows sublists			
d) Has a simple gapfill maker			
e) Has other gapfill makers			
f) Allows you to change the colour of words in each sublist			
g) Is good for visual learners			

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Task 4: Using AWL highlighters

For the following task, you will need to navigate to the AWL highlighters shown in the video. The links are below.

EAP Foundation	https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/highlighter/
Notthingham Uni	http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm
Lextutor	https://www.lextutor.ca/vp/eng/

i) Go to any AWL highlighter and type in the short text below (from Task 1). Which words are in the AWL? Are these words you thought were academic?

> *There are two significant reasons for this thing. The most notable is the decline in the amount of stuff that is sold. This has been really bad for merchants. A second reason is an increase in price, which has been bad for shoppers.*

ii) Study the following words.

- Which ones do you think might be in the AWL?
- Type the words in to check. Make a note of the sublist.
  - book
  - chemical
  - context
  - reason
  - diminish
  - example
  - refer
  - deduce
  - external
  - since
  - flexible
  - strategy
  - thought
  - hypothesis
  - experiment
  - result
  - appreciate
  - integrity

iii) Access the following page, which reviews AWL highlighters. Copy and paste the text (not including the final table) **into all three highlighters** and answer the questions.

https://www.eapfoundation.com/news/reviews/highlighters/

- Which sublist has the most number of words? _____
- How many words are in that sublist? _____
- Which sublist(s) have no words? _____
- There should be more words in sublists 1, 2 etc. and fewer in sublists 10, 9 etc. Is this the case? _____
- What percentage of words in the text are in the following? *Round to the nearest whole number.*
  - GSL _____%
  - AWL _____%
  - Neither (off-list) _____%
- Which of the three highlighters do you prefer using? _____

Further reading/viewing

The following page (used to in the video) gives a full list of AWL words and word families.
https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/awllists/

The following page (also given above) gives a review of the three highlighters.
https://www.eapfoundation.com/news/reviews/highlighters/

The following short video gives general information on the AWL.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCGWOrqSU8I

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Answers

Task 1: Before watching

i) What does the word *academic* mean? **Relating to school, college or university**

ii)

- Which words seem particularly suitable for *academic writing*?
  significant, reasons, notable, decline, amount, merchants, increase, price
- Which ones seem *non-academic*?
  thing, stuff, really, bad, shoppers

iii) For the words which seem non-academic, can you suggest better alternatives?

thing => trend
stuff => goods/merchandise/items [note: sentence grammar may change]
really => extremely
bad => negative/disadvantageous/harmful
shoppers => consumers

Task 2: About the AWL

1. What is the Academic Word List (AWL)? **A list of word families which frequently appear in academic texts, but which are not contained in the General Service List (GSL).**

Note: This answer was shown visually in the video, but was not spoken. It can be inferred from the spoken information.

Complete the following table, giving information about the AWL and GSL.

Word List	**Abbreviation**	**% of words covered**
Academic Word List	AWL	**2. 10%**
3. General Service List	GSL	**4. 80%**

5. Based on the above information, what percentage of words in written English would a student know if they knew all GSL and AWL words? **90%**

6. How many sublists are there in the AWL? **10**

7. What is the difference between sublist 1 and sublist 2? **Words in sublist 1 are *more frequent* than those in sublist 2.**

8. How many word *families* are there in the AWL? **570 [= *9 x 60 + 1 x 30*]**

9. The following words are the first words from the first three sublists. Which one is sublist 1, which is sublist 2, which is sublist 3?

3 *alternative* **1** *analyse* **2** *achieve*

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Task 3: AWL highlighters

10. Why is the AWL highlighter an important tool for studying vocabulary? **An AWL highlighter allows students to *study words in context.***

11. Complete the table to show whether the highlighter has this feature (✓) or not (×).

Feature [*Lex = Lextutor, Nott = Nottingham Uni, EAPF = EAPFoundation.com*]	**Lex**	**Nott**	**EAPF**
a) Highlights AWL words	✓	✓	✓
b) Has data e.g. % of AWL words in text	✓		
c) Shows sublists	✓		✓
d) Has a simple gapfill maker		✓	✓
e) Has other gapfill makers			✓
f) Allows you to change the colour of words in each sublist			✓
g) Is good for visual learners			✓

Task 4: Using AWL highlighters

i)

*There are two **significant** reasons for this thing. The most notable is the **decline** in the amount of stuff that is sold. This has been really bad for merchants. A second reason is an increase in price, which has been bad for shoppers.*

Note: The other 'academic' words noted in task 1 are still fine for academic use, but are in the GSL not the AWL.

ii)

○	book	*not in AWL*	○	since	*not in AWL*
○	chemical	**7**	○	flexible	**6**
○	context	**1**	○	strategy	**2**
○	reason	*not in AWL*	○	thought	*not in AWL*
○	diminish	**9**	○	hypothesis	**4**
○	example	*not in AWL*	○	experiment	*not in AWL*
○	refer	*not in AWL*	○	result	*not in AWL*
○	deduce	**3**	○	appreciate	**8**
○	external	**5**	○	integrity	**10**

iii)

- Which sublist has the most number of words? **Sublist 1**
- How many words are in that sublist? **11**
  [*available benefit context create identify issue major requires researchers significant specifically*]
- Which sublist(s) have no words? **Sublists 6, 9, 10**
- There should be more words in sublists 1, 2 etc. and fewer in sublists 10, 9 etc. Is this the case? **Yes**
  Sublist 1 has the most (11 words), sublist 2 the next most (8 words), while sublists 9 and 10 have no words.
- What percentage of words in the text are in the following?
  - GSL **80%**
  - AWL **7%**
  - Neither (off-list) **13%**
- Which of the three highlighters do you prefer using? ***Answers vary!***

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Teacher's Notes

Video name:	**Academic Word List (AWL) Highlighters**
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Alternate link:	http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNDUxOTczNjMxNg==.html
Video length:	7.15
Learning Outcomes:	(1) Understand what the AWL is, and its relation to the GSL. (2) Be aware of features of different AWL highlighters. (3) Be able to use AWL highlighters to study academic vocabulary.

The following activities are intended to give students a general understanding of the AWL (Learning Outcome 1/Task 2), an understanding of different AWL highlighters (Learning Outcome 2/Task 3), and practice using AWL highlighters (Learning Outcome 3/Task 4).

Suggested sequence/timings (for teachers)
The following is a possible sequence for a 50' lesson.

1. Warm-up (10')
a) Begin by discussing vocabulary in general. E.g. which is more important for study, grammar or vocabulary? Why?
b) Do *Task 1: Before watching*. This task can be done before giving the handout to students, e.g. copy text/questions to the board or PPT.
c) Go through answers. Note: not necessary to explain which words are in the AWL, as that is covered in a later task.

2. Video comprehension (25')
a) Direct students to watch the video and take notes.
b) Give out the handout and have students (in pairs) complete Tasks 1-2.
c) If necessary, allow students to watch a second time to check answers.
d) Go through answers with students.

3. Use of AWL highlighters (15')
a) Students complete Task 3.
b) Go through answers with students.

4. Extension activities (if time)
a) Allow students to choose another text, and paste into the highlighters.
b) Use some of the other features, e.g. the gapfill maker for EAPFoundation website, or the definitions of AWL words (click on words listed).
c) Study some of the AWL words (in any of the texts) that they do not know.

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Below is a copy of the text for Task 4 iii).

AWL highlighters: review
Review date: 30 August, 2013

For another look at the same content, check out YouTube » or Youku ».

The AWL (Academic Word List) is widely used by EAP teachers and students. It is important, when learning vocabulary, to study words in context, so the AWL itself is not very useful except to identify academic words which EAP students could study. There are some useful AWL highlighters available online, which allow users to copy and paste a text and highlight all words from the AWL. Perfect! Instant context.

At the time of writing, there are three major AWL highlighters available on the web: one on the Lextutor website, one from Nottingham University, and the one from EAPFoundation.com (this website). Each of these is reviewed below, followed by a summary of the main features.

Lextutor
The Lextutor website has many useful tools. Although many of these are aimed at researchers, it includes a vocabulary highlighter. It is not specifically an AWL highlighter, as it also highlights words from the GSL, broken down into two groups: K1 (the first 1000 words in the GSL) and K2 (the next 1000) words. It highlights the words using different colours: yellow for AWL words, blue for K1, green for K2, and red for 'off-list' words, i.e. words which are neither in the AWL of the GSL. It categorises the AWL words into the ten sublists. There are also many useful vocabulary exercises on the site, and a concordancer, so you can see more examples of words in context.

While there is no denying this is a fantastic website for EAP teachers and English language professionals, it is not such a great site for the EAP learner. There are two major drawbacks in my opinion. First, it is not very user friendly, perhaps because its main audience seems to be researchers, not students. The second problem is the ugly colour scheme. If you enjoy websites with black background and bright lettering, you'll be fine, but I personally don't.

Nottingham University
The Nottingham University highlighter is probably the most well-known highlighter. It certainly has the most links on the internet (try a search engine search to see for yourself). It is very simple, which means it is more user-friendly than the Lextutor highlighter. In addition to the highlighter, there is also a simple gapfill maker, which replaces all the AWL words in a text with blanks, so that you can test your knowledge of them. Unlike the Lextutor site, the Nottingham website has some general information about the AWL in addition to the highlighter. This site is clearly more geared to students that teachers or researchers.

The main positives of this site are its simplicity and user-friendliness. In a way, those are also its drawbacks: it is not as powerful or useful as either the Lextutor highlighter, or the highlighter on EAPFoundation.com.

EAPFoundation.com
OK, so first I should admit, I am quite biased, as this is the highlighter for this website. On the other hand, it should be noted that this highlighter was constructed with the others in mind. I was aware of their problems and limitations, and set out to create something which improved on them.

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One thing I have been very conscious of with this site is making it user-friendly. The main audience is students, though teachers also benefit from it. The highlighter is easy for students to use. It is so easy that I included a version of it on every page (the AWL widget). The highlighter lists the words according to sublist (level), as I felt this was an important feature and the main thing lacking in the Nottingham highlighter. There is also information elsewhere on the site about the AWL, so students can understand it more fully. I also thought it would be good to make the highlighter more interactive: doing, not just seeing, appealing to kinaesthetic learning styles. There are therefore some nice ways to play around with the AWL words, e.g. changing the colours of the different levels, or using a tag cloud highlighter, which changes the size and colour of the words according to level. One weakness of students when learning vocabulary is to focus on meaning, without considering word families. I therefore felt it was essential to create a word family gapfill maker, so that students can explore different forms of the words being highlighted.

All of which sounds very positive, though I must admit, there are some drawbacks. The most significant one is that it is not possible to cut and paste the highlighted text*. I'm trying to fix that. Another is that all of the highlighter requires JavaScript. This isn't a problem for most users, though some users may have JavaScript turned off.

* Actually, this seems to be a browser related issue. Firefox (my preferred browser), Opera, and older versions of IE don't copy and paste, but Chrome and newer versions of IE (9 and above) all work fine.

Summary

Below is a summary of the main (positive) features of the highlighters, and which ones have these features. This should help you to choose the one which suits you best. The following code is used: Lex (Lextutor); Nott (Nottingham); EAPF (EAPFoundation).

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