

Academic Language Bridge

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Use this chart to intentionally pair academic language with kid-friendly language during daily instruction—when students hear both versions regularly, “test language” becomes familiar instead of intimidating. For more guidance on effective strategies, instructional prompts, and lesson structures, see *The Reading Strategies Book 2.0*, *The Writing Strategies Book*, and *Teaching Writing in Small Groups* from Jennifer Serravallo.

ACADEMIC/ TEST LANGUAGE	KID-FRIENDLY LANGUAGE	WHAT TEACHERS MIGHT SAY
Analyze	Break it apart; look closely at the parts	"Let's analyze this character's motivation—study each of their actions to see why they made that choice."
Author's purpose	Why the author wrote this	"What's the author's purpose for writing this? Why do you think they wanted to share this information?"
Cite evidence	Show me where it says that; find proof in the text	"Cite evidence from page [#] that supports your thinking. Point to the exact words that prove it."
Compare and contrast	How are they the same and different?	"Compare and contrast these two habitats. How are they similar, and what makes them different?"
Context clues	Hints around the word that help you figure it out	"Use context clues to determine what 'reluctant' means. What hints in the sentence help you figure it out?"
Describe	Tell what it's like; paint a picture with words	"Describe the setting using details from the text. Paint a picture with your words so we can visualize it."
Determine	Figure out; decide	"Determine the main idea of this paragraph. What do you think it's mostly about?"
Draw conclusions	Put the clues together to figure it out	"Draw a conclusion about what might happen next. Put all the clues together to figure out where the story is heading."
Evaluate	Judge; decide if it's good or makes sense	"Evaluate the author's argument. Does it make sense? Is the evidence strong enough to convince you?"
Explain	Tell why or how	"Explain how the water cycle works. Tell me the steps and why each one happens."
Illustrate	Show; give an example	"Illustrate your understanding by giving an example from your own life that connects to this."
Infer	Make an informed guess; read between the lines	"What can you infer about how she's feeling? The author doesn't say directly, so use clues to figure it out."

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Interpret	Explain what you think it means	"How do you interpret this line of poetry? What do you think the author means here?"
Justify	Prove your thinking; explain why you're right	"Justify your answer. Prove to me why you think that's correct, using evidence from the text."
Main idea	What it's mostly about; the big idea	"What's the main idea of this article? Tell me the big idea—what is it mostly teaching us?"
Perspective	How someone sees or thinks about something	"Consider this from the character's perspective. How does she see this situation differently than others?"
Point of view	Who's telling the story; whose side we see	"From whose point of view is this story told? Who is telling it, and how does that shape what we learn?"
Prior knowledge	What you already know	"Use your prior knowledge about ecosystems. What do you already know that can help you understand this?"
Relevant	Related to what we're talking about; important for this	"Choose relevant details that answer the question. Which information is actually related to what we need to know?"
Summarize	Tell the important parts; give the short version	"Turn and summarize what we just read—tell your partner the most important parts in just a few sentences."
Support your answer	Back up what you said; give reasons	"Support your answer with details from the text. What reasons can you give to back up your thinking?"
Synthesize	Put information from different places together	"Synthesize what we learned from both articles. Put the information together to create new understanding."
Text structure	How the writing is organized	"Notice the text structure here—this article uses cause and effect. How is the information organized?"
Theme	The big lesson or message	"What's the theme of this story? What big lesson or message is the author teaching us?"
Tone	How the author sounds (happy, serious, etc.)	"What's the author's tone in this passage? How does the writing sound—serious, playful, worried?"

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