



FREE RESOURCE · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 181 to 190

The ten words in this set (question, during, always, big, set, small, study, follow, begin, important) are useful in all four parts of the IELTS test. They help you give a clear reason, a time frame and a size. Watch the word that comes after them, such as ask a question, not make a question, and study for an exam.

The words

WORD	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE
question noun	/ˈkwɛstʃən/	a sentence you ask to get information; also, a problem or topic to discuss.	<i>The interviewer asked a question about my daily routine.</i>
during preposition	/ˈdjʊərɪŋ/	at some point in, or through all of, a period of time.	<i>Rainfall is highest during the winter months.</i>
always adverb	/ˈɔːlweɪz/	at all times; every time.	<i>My father has always encouraged me to study hard.</i>
big adjective	/bɪɡ/	large in size, amount or importance.	<i>Moving to a big city is a big decision for many young people.</i>
set verb, noun	/set/	to put in a place; to establish; a group of things that belong together.	<i>The government should set clear targets for reducing waste.</i>
small adjective	/smɔːl/	not large in size, number or amount.	<i>A small number of students study abroad every year.</i>
study verb, noun	/ˈstʌdi/	to learn about a subject; a piece of research.	<i>A recent study of city life found that parks improve mental health.</i>
follow verb	/ˈfɒləʊ/	to go or come after; to do what is said or shown.	<i>Please follow the instructions on the screen carefully.</i>
begin verb	/bɪˈɡɪn/	to start doing or being something.	<i>The research began with a simple survey of local students.</i>
important adjective	/ɪmˈpɔːtənt/	having great value or effect; needing attention.	<i>It is important to review your writing before the end of the test.</i>

Exercises

- The phone rang _____ the lecture.
 - while
 - during
 - when it was
- Please _____ the instructions carefully before you begin.

a. follow

b. follow to

c. follow after

3. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) The teacher (2) made a question (3) about the graph (4) yesterday.

4. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): kind / Our teacher / was / has always been

5. Correct this: *I study to my exam every evening.*

6. Only a small _____ of students passed the test.

a. amount

b. number

c. size

7. Which syllable is stressed in **important**? im · por · tant

8. The meeting will _____ at nine o'clock.

a. begun

b. begin

c. began

9. Which word has a long /ɔ:/ sound, like in small?

a. will

b. well

c. wall

10. He _____ up a company after he left university.

a. set

b. sat

c. seated

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/common-english-words-181-190/practice/

IELTS tip. In Speaking Part 3, begin a longer answer with It is important to... or One reason is... and then add an example. In Writing Task 2, replace big with large or major and use during with a time noun to show when something happens.

FOR TEACHERS · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

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AIM	Learners recognise, pronounce and use ten high-frequency words (question, during, always, big, set, small, study, follow, begin, important) accurately in IELTS-style sentences.
TIME	20 minutes
LEVEL	B1 to B2 (IELTS 5 to 6.5)
MATERIALS	This worksheet, one copy per learner; the free online practice for the audio

Warm-up

Learners write three things they always do before an exam, then read them aloud. Check always is in the right position in each sentence.

Lesson steps

1. Show the ten words on the board. Learners sort them into three groups: I use it, I know it but do not use it, I am not sure. Compare answers in pairs.
2. Use the Hear audio. Drill each word chorally, then individually, marking the stressed syllable. Pay attention to: the long /ɔ:/ in small, the stress in important and begin, and the final /ɪ/ in during.
3. Learners read the collocations and example sentences, then close the page and rebuild three collocations from memory. Check the watch-out notes together.
4. Learners complete the ten-item quiz alone, then explain to a partner why each wrong option is wrong.

Extension

Learners prepare a one-minute talk about the most important thing in their studies, using at least four words from this set.

Answer key

1. b) during. During is followed by a noun, here the lecture. While needs a full clause, and when it was does not complete the idea.
2. a) follow. Follow takes a direct object, so no preposition is needed.
3. Part 2: *made a question* → **asked a question**. In English the fixed phrase is ask a question. Make, do and say do not fit.
4. Our teacher has always been kind. Always sits between has and been. The extra word was cannot be placed in the sentence.
5. I study for my exam every evening. We study for an exam. The word to does not show purpose with study.
6. b) number. Students can be counted, so we say a small number of students. Amount is used for things you cannot count.

7. im**POR**tant. The main stress is on the middle syllable: im-POR-tant.
8. b) begin. After will we use the base form, which is begin. Began and begun are past forms.
9. c) wall. Small and wall both have the long /ɔ:/. Well has /e/, and will has /ɪ/.
10. a) set. Set up means to start a business. Sat comes from sit, and seated does not form this phrase.

Questions learners often ask

Do we say make a question or ask a question? In English you ask a question. Make a question is a common error for speakers of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian.

When should I use during and when should I use while? Use during before a noun (during the exam). Use while before a clause with a subject and verb (while I was waiting).

Is big a good word for IELTS Writing? It is correct but informal. In an essay, large, major or significant often sound more academic, for example a large number of people.

Sources

- Browne, C., Culligan, B. & Phillips, J. (2013). The New General Service List (NGSL) 1.2. newgeneralservicelist.com. CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Swan, M. (2016). Practical English Usage, 4th edition. Oxford University Press.

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