

Key Unit Vocabulary

This report provides a summary of key vocabulary for this unit. For each word, you will find the definition, part of speech, word forms (plurals/tenses), synonyms, and examples of how the word, or forms of the word, are used in a sentence.

Anthropocene

- the most recent geological epoch in which humans have made the largest impact on the environment through land use, the burning of fossil fuels, and other mostly harmful activities

Part of speech:	proper noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	The term Anthropocene was coined in 2000 by an atmospheric chemist who was worried about our effect on the environment and climate.

automation

- operation by machinery rather than by people

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	automate
Synonyms:	mechanization, computerization
In a sentence:	The automation of the manufacturing workforce threatens people's jobs but can also increase production.

biodiversity

- the diversity of life forms on Earth or part of the Earth, including diversity of species, genes, and ecosystems, especially when regarded as providing the optimal conditions for evolution

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	biological diversity
In a sentence:	Climate change threatens the current biodiversity that exists on our planet.

civil disobedience

- the intentional, nonviolent refusal to comply with a government law or requirement, in order to try to influence the government to change some law, policy, or the like

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	nonviolent noncooperation
In a sentence:	Acts of civil disobedience are seen as a way to push policymakers to listen to the issues of citizens.

climate change

- a change in global and regional climate patterns attributed to an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	global warming
In a sentence:	While climate change terrifies most scientists, there are still some who refuse to believe that these changes are taking place.

consumption

- the purchase of goods and services

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	consume, consumer, consumerism
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	Consumption in the US is generally highest during the holiday season.

deforestation

- the removal of forest or trees from an area of land

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	deforest
Synonyms:	logging, clear-cutting
In a sentence:	Producing paper encourages deforestation and other negative environmental impacts.

drought

- an unusually prolonged lack of rain

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	droughts
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	In the 1930s, there were a series of severe droughts in America that led to a dustbowl in the nation's interior.

economic liberalization

- the state or act of decreasing government control of the economy in order to increase the role of private entities in the market

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	The economic liberalization of China has been kept in check partially by its communist government.

emission

- that which is discharged or released, usually relating to such things as car exhaust and factory fumes

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	emissions
Synonyms:	discharge, release, secretion
In a sentence:	The country is working hard to lower its greenhouse gas emissions.

environment

- the sum of everything that surrounds animals and humans in the natural world, including the air, water, and soil; the sum of things, circumstances, and conditions that surround one and may have an effect on one

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	environments, environmental, environmentalist
Synonyms:	surroundings, setting, habitat
In a sentence:	Climate activists are working hard to preserve our environment.

epidemic

- an outbreak, usually of disease, that spreads rapidly, afflicting many individuals

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	epidemics
Synonyms:	outbreak, plague, pandemic
In a sentence:	With a mortality rate of 70 percent, the more cases that arise, the deadlier this epidemic becomes.

globalization

- the process or idea of the world becoming more like that of a single nation with one shared economy and culture rather than separate, distinct countries

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	globalize
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	The globalization of our systems of trade have led to most of the goods found in the US being produced in China.

gross domestic product (GDP)

- the total market value of the goods and services produced by a country's economy during a specified period of time

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	A country's GDP is a good metric for the strength of its economy.

humanitarian

- characterized by concern for improving the welfare of humanity

Part of speech:	adjective
Word forms:	humanitarianism
Synonyms:	altruistic, humane
In a sentence:	The company was motivated more by the desire for profits than by humanitarian concerns.

inequality

- the condition of being unequal, especially in natural talents or social or economic status

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	inequalities
Synonyms:	injustice, unfairness, disparity
In a sentence:	One of the many inequalities experienced by the lower class is lack of access to resources.

liberalize

- to make or become more liberal (relating to a theory in economics emphasizing individual freedom from restraint and usually based on free competition, the self-regulating market, and the gold standard)

Part of speech:	verb
Word forms:	liberalizes, liberalized, liberalizing
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	The ruling political party liberalized the country's economic policy.

monoculture

- the cultivation or growth of a single crop or organism especially on agricultural or forest land

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	Ireland's monoculture in the nineteenth century proved to be disastrous when a fungus wiped out the crop and led to the Irish potato famine.

multinational

- relating to or involving several countries

Part of speech:	adjective
Word forms:	
Synonyms:	global, intercontinental
In a sentence:	The multinational corporation had offices in San Francisco, Tokyo, and Dubai.

nationalization

- the act of bringing under government ownership or control

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	nationalize
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	The nationalization of several banks in Poland created an uproar among capitalists.

neocolonialism

- the use of economic, political, or other means to retain control over former colonies

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	neocolonial, neocolonialist
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	Neocolonialism has led to the economic dependency of many former colonies on developed countries for trade and goods.

non-governmental organization (NGO)

- any non-profit organization or body that operates independently of government

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
Synonyms:	non-profit
In a sentence:	The non-governmental organization your cousin works for raises money to lobby for prison reform.

pesticide

- a chemical substance used to kill pests, especially insects that harm crops

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	pesticides
Synonyms:	poison
In a sentence:	The crops are repeatedly treated with pesticide to kill organisms that might harm them.

privatize

- to change from governmental control or ownership to private

Part of speech:	verb
Word forms:	privatizes, privatizing, privatized
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	The railways in that country that were once government owned are now being privatized.

regulation

- a principle, rule, or law designed to regulate behavior and conduct

Part of speech:	noun
Word forms:	regulations, regulatory
Synonyms:	law, rule
In a sentence:	Fire department regulations require public buildings to be equipped with sprinklers.

socioeconomic

- of, related to, or characterizing the social and economic aspects of something

Part of speech:	adjective
Word forms:	socioeconomically
Synonyms:	
In a sentence:	My grandparents came from very different socioeconomic backgrounds, my grandfather coming from a poor, Jewish family from Poland and my grandmother coming from a wealthy, Irish-Catholic family.