

Key messages from the Year 8 English training

How to use this leaflet

The leaflet is designed for teachers who were unable to attend the national training.

- It summarises the key points from the training.
- It explains how you can use the course video material containing the teaching of presentational talk and the use of guided reading.
- It is best used as part of a departmental training session.

The teacher who attended the training has been given a copy of the video and of the *Key Objectives Bank: Year 8*. This booklet contains ideas for teaching and assessing the key objectives from the *Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9*. This material is also available on the Key Stage 3 Strategy website at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

What is distinctive about Year 8?

Year 8 pupils tend to be:

- in between childhood and adolescence, often vacillating between the two;
- influenced by their peer group;
- seeking greater independence;
- full of emotionally charged energy.

School issues relating to Year 8:

- the curriculum needs to build on Year 7;
- curriculum time is less than in Year 7 for some subjects;
- homework and independent study are a focus;
- a dip in attainment is a concern;
- maintaining enthusiasm and fostering co-operation are key.

Issues relating to English teaching in Year 8:

- the need to 'unpick' writing, reading and speaking and listening in order to make the processes transparent to pupils;
- the importance of experimentation in writing in order to gain control over genres;
- how to teach extended writing;
- the need to widen the repertoire in reading and speaking and listening to foster engagement and personal preference;
- a focus on reflection and self-review to nurture independence.

Reading

Two worries about reading for teachers of Year 8 are:

- the decline in personal reading particularly by boys
- the need to continue to teach reading at different levels of ability.

The context for teaching reading in Year 8

All Year 8 pupils need to develop and apply reading skills.

- Some, less able pupils, need to concentrate on decoding and making sense of text, while other Year 8 pupils need to develop their inferential and deductive skills.
- Our reading focus has been on the analysis of texts, rather than reading strategies and skills: we need to maintain both.
- Few Year 8 pupils use the library, unless they need to find out something for homework or research projects.

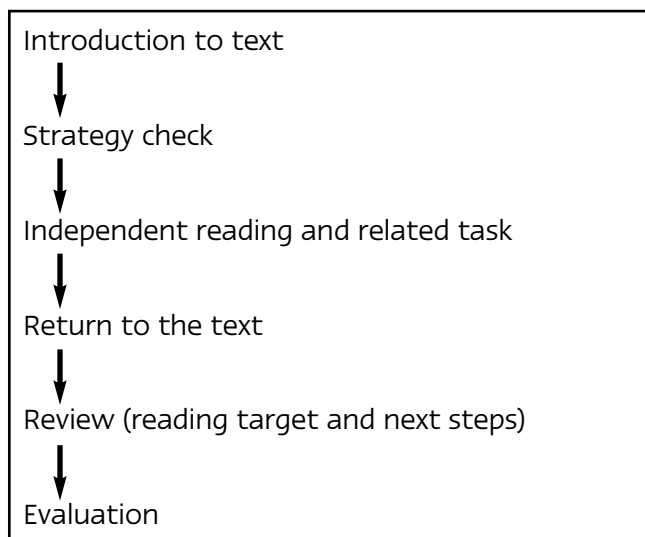
Guided reading

Guided reading is a strategy that can be used to teach reading at different levels of ability and can develop pupils' reading skills as well as encouraging pupils to read for pleasure.

Key features of guided reading are:

- Pupils are grouped by ability, need or focus.
- The teacher plans the session, following an instructional sequence.
- The teacher works with the group for a short, focused session (e.g. 20 minutes).
- Pupils spend some time reading independently.
- Follow-up tasks and targets are set to ensure continuity and progression.

The teaching sequence for guided reading is:



The video material shows this teaching sequence in use with a Year 8 class who are working on the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar.

Supporting weak readers in guided reading

It is best to gather similar types of readers together for coaching in guided reading sessions and apply the approaches most appropriate for them.

'Joyless Reciters' – pupils who are competent decoders but pay insufficient attention to meaning.

- Oblige them to read for meaning.
- Give them questions to bear in mind when reading.
- Encourage rereading.

'Inspired Guessworkers' – pupils who 'grab' at meaning and are comfortable with texts that are predictable and full of clues. They are at home with simple narrative but soon run into difficulties when texts become more complex and their reading is noticeably inaccurate.

- Take them back to incorrect words, get them to look at all parts of the word and try again.
- Show them how to break words down by sound (phonics).

'Frustrated Readers' – pupils who struggle with reading, have little stamina and soon tire in an unequal battle with the text. They have fluent moments but struggle with long sentences and complex syntax.

- Choose easier books so they are not at frustration level.
- Read in short bursts.
- Select the order of the books they read with care so there is a gradual increase in challenge and confidence is boosted.
- Choose books that use repetition to support fluency.
- Mix familiar books and new books to stretch them a little.

'Disengaged Readers' – pupils who take no joy in reading; they flick and skip to avoid reading. They guess at words and don't much mind if it doesn't make sense.

- Choose books they will love.
- Read to them until they are hooked and then let them finish.
- Insist on sense; make them reread sentences.
- Use activities such as cloze and sequencing.

Supporting gifted and talented readers

Guided reading sessions are particularly valuable for able pupils:

- They are working in a context of high achievement.
- Individual contributions can be valued.
- The focus can be on untypically demanding objectives, e.g. from later years.
- Texts and tasks can be more challenging.
- Sessions can start with pupil speculation and demonstration.
- Older pupils or additional adults can join the sessions.
- Preparatory reading can be drawn upon with confidence.
- Group or individual targets can be set for follow-up work.
- The excitement of excellence can be shared.

Speaking and listening

Effective presentational talk

Successful presentational talk requires the following:

- in-depth knowledge of the audience's needs and expertise in the topic under discussion
- careful planning, in order to ensure that the presentation is clear and well-signposted for the audience
- supporting evidence or illustrations to emphasise key messages
- ability to match language and intonation to the audience and purpose, e.g. degree of formality, rhetorical devices, rhythm, stress
- effective non-verbal communication, e.g. gesture, eye contact, posture, body language.

These features all need to be planned and taught, and the following teaching sequence, which was first introduced in the English department training, provides a structure for this.

A teaching sequence for oral work

A teaching sequence for oral work

1. Teaching objectives which are made explicit to the class
2. Provide an example or model of an oral language text type and use in class or group investigation or discussion
3. Identify purposes, outcomes, 'ground rules'
4. Define speaking and listening conventions
5. Activity or oral task that enables pupils to rehearse and explore language conventions in a supported context
6. Reflection and review, focusing on speaking and listening objectives.

The video

In the video that accompanies these materials, a mixed ability Year 8 class is being taught how to deliver a sustained presentation to an audience, using this sequence over two lessons. The video was filmed at Plumstead Manor School in the London Borough of Greenwich, a large comprehensive school for girls aged 11–18, of whom more than 30% speak English as an additional language.

On the video, the following teaching strategies are used:

- teacher modelling of delivering a presentation
- creation of and frequent references to criteria for delivering presentations
- guided groups for preparing and rehearsing presentations
- modelling of the evaluation process.

As a result, the pupils achieve the following:

- well-planned and structured presentations
- inclusive learning for pupils who speak English as an additional language
- appropriate use of standard English
- effective evaluation skills, enhanced by constant reference to the criteria.

Other useful suggestions for teaching effective speaking and listening can be found in the *Key objectives bank: Year 8*.

Other priorities for teaching speaking and listening in Year 8

- Teaching speaking and listening in a range of contexts – this should include some more formal contexts where pupils are taught to speak and listen in a sustained way
- Exploring the features of successful speaking and listening with pupils so that they develop a sense of purpose and quality in their own work
- Encouraging reflection on strengths and weaknesses in pupils' own speaking and listening performances
- Setting up clear structures and ground rules for classroom talk and keeping to these
- Integrating speaking and listening into all parts of the lesson, but planning for some 'set pieces' for which speaking and listening is the central activity and the main objective.

Speaking and listening: targets for Year 8 pupils

When giving or listening to a presentation:

- listen with concentration
- allow yourself thinking time to prepare questions or responses
- plan linking phrases and key sentences into your presentation so that your audience will be able to follow and understand
- talk confidently and make eye contact
- introduce and summarise the main points of content clearly
- match the language you use to your purpose and audience
- include some variety in the way you express yourself and the words you use.

Targets such as these are an effective way of working towards agreed targets and better than trying to make general improvements. They also make assessment for learning easier and more efficient.

Extended writing

- **Extended writing** challenges pupils to organise, elaborate and develop ideas.
- **Sustained writing** challenges pupils to write for longer periods of time, placing particular demands on stamina and ready composition.

The aim is to build up control at text, sentence and word level. Time alone is insufficient: extended writing requires skill in planning, pacing and developing writing.

Planning the time for extended writing

The key to a good plan for extended writing is to segment the writing into manageable chunks. These chunks are not lengths of writing but conceptual chunks. For example, the familiar phases in the story may be used as a basis for planning:

'Secret Place' story		
Chunks	Teaching points	Approach
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the story sequence 	Lesson 1 Explain the sequence and exemplify from known stories. <i>Shared reading</i> of extracts to identify effective scene-setting techniques Set up the idea of a 'secret place' discovered, explored and revealed
Set the scene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing time, place and people • Using suggestive details 	Lesson 2 <i>Shared writing</i> of an opening paragraph for a class version <i>Group writing</i> of openings of group versions, shared in plenary
Introduce a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whetting the reader's curiosity • Helping the reader to see it coming 	Lesson 3 <i>Shared writing</i> of a problem introduced into the class version <i>Group writing</i> to progress group versions, shared in plenary
Intensification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying ratchets • How to build suspense 	Lesson 4 <i>Shared reading</i> analysis of a suspense-building extract <i>Shared writing</i> to extend the extract in same style <i>Group writing</i> of own story, shared in plenary
Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to communicate urgency • How to write action sequences 	Lesson 5 <i>Shared reading</i> analysis of high-action sequence <i>Shared writing</i> to extend the extract in same style <i>Individual writing</i> to extend group story, shared in a plenary
Adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for empathy • Psychological detail 	Lesson 6 <i>Group drama</i> activities to prepare for writing of post-crisis situation <i>Shared</i> generation of useful phrases <i>Individual writing</i> , shared in plenary
Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just deserts • Ways of bringing the story to rest 	Lesson 7 <i>Shared reading</i> of endings, to generalise about features of effective endings <i>Group discussion</i> of intended endings of individual stories <i>Individual writing</i> , shared in plenary

Notice:

- the shift from writing a *whole-class* story, to composition in *groups*, which is eventually taken over by *individuals* extending it in the final stages
- the deliberate move from shared, supported writing to independent composition
- the way explicit teaching occurs at strategic points.

Benefits of 'chunking' extended writing:

- It breaks it into manageable chunks that are not daunting.
- There is variety, pace and focus in each lesson.
- There are opportunities to teach.
- The groupwork allows the teacher to join a group for guided work.

Bright ideas

Use a card sort to gather and marshal ideas

- Ask pupils to brainstorm ideas onto separate small cards
- Invite them to group the cards into categories
- Sequence the categories

This marshals the ideas into manageable chunks, perhaps paragraphs.

Collect lead-in lines and connectives that pupils can use in the task

e.g. phrases that will be useful to refute an argument

Although some people argue that...

On the other hand...

And yet...

Despite these claims...

Cynics may claim that...

Few people believe that...

It is hard to see how...

Only the hardest hearts would...

TOP TIPS

- Break the writing into manageable chunks.
- Teach at strategic points.
- Be explicit about the techniques and approaches that good writers use.
- Dispense with starters unless they can be helpful.
- Design lessons to shift pupils towards independence.
- Move between teaching and supporting the writing process.
- Model an aspect of composition if it's new to pupils.
- Include activities that help pupils to gather, organise and sequence ideas.
- Teach cohesion and coherence techniques.
- Offer or gather connectives that will be useful for the work in hand.
- Support groups of writers *as they write* (guided writing).