



Department
for Education

English programmes of study: key stage 4

National curriculum in England

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Purpose of study

English has a pre-eminent place in education and in society. A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils, therefore, who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.

Aims

The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment. The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils:

- read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.

Spoken language

The national curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language continues to underpin the development of pupils' reading and writing during key stage 4 and teachers should therefore ensure pupils' confidence and competence in this area continue to develop. Pupils should be taught to understand and use the conventions for discussion and debate, as well as continuing to develop their skills in working collaboratively with their peers to discuss reading, writing and speech across the curriculum.

Reading and writing

Reading at key stage 4 should be wide, varied and challenging. Pupils should be expected to read whole books, to read in depth and to read for pleasure and information.

Pupils should continue to develop their knowledge of and skills in writing, refining their drafting skills and developing resilience to write at length. They should be taught to write formal and academic essays as well as writing imaginatively. They should be taught to write for a variety of purposes and audiences across a range of contexts. This requires an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.

Opportunities for teachers to enhance pupils' vocabulary will arise naturally from their reading and writing. Teachers should show pupils how to understand the relationships between words, how to understand nuances in meaning, and how to develop their understanding of, and ability to use, figurative language.

Pupils should be taught to control their speaking and writing consciously, understand why sentences are constructed as they are and to use Standard English. They should understand and use age-appropriate vocabulary, including linguistic and literary terminology, for discussing their reading, writing and spoken language. This involves consolidation, practice and discussion of language. It is important that pupils learn the correct grammatical terms in English and that these terms are integrated within teaching.

Teachers should build on the knowledge and skills that pupils have been taught at key stage 3. Decisions about progression should be based on the security of pupils' linguistic knowledge, skills and understanding and their readiness to progress to the next stage. Pupils whose linguistic development is more advanced should be challenged through being offered opportunities for increased breadth and depth in reading and writing. Those who are less fluent should consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills, including through additional practice.

Glossary

A non-statutory [glossary](#) is provided for teachers.

Key stage 4

Reading

Pupils should be taught to:

- read and appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage through:
 - reading a wide range of high-quality, challenging, classic literature and extended literary non-fiction, such as essays, reviews and journalism. This writing should include whole texts. The range will include:
 - at least one play by Shakespeare
 - works from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries
 - poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry
 - re-reading literature and other writing as a basis for making comparisons
 - choosing and reading books independently for challenge, interest and enjoyment.
- understand and critically evaluate texts through:
 - reading in different ways for different purposes, summarising and synthesising ideas and information, and evaluating their usefulness for particular purposes
 - drawing on knowledge of the purpose, audience for and context of the writing, including its social, historical and cultural context and the literary tradition to which it belongs, to inform evaluation
 - identifying and interpreting themes, ideas and information
 - exploring aspects of plot, characterisation, events and settings, the relationships between them and their effects
 - seeking evidence in the text to support a point of view, including justifying inferences with evidence
 - distinguishing between statements that are supported by evidence and those that are not, and identifying bias and misuse of evidence
 - analysing a writer's choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features, and evaluating their effectiveness and impact
 - making critical comparisons, referring to the contexts, themes, characterisation, style and literary quality of texts, and drawing on knowledge and skills from wider reading
- make an informed personal response, recognising that other responses to a text are possible and evaluating these.

Writing

Pupils should be taught to:

- write accurately, fluently, effectively and at length for pleasure and information through:
 - adapting their writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences: to describe, narrate, explain, instruct, give and respond to information, and argue
 - selecting and organising ideas, facts and key points, and citing evidence, details and quotation effectively and pertinently for support and emphasis
 - selecting, and using judiciously, vocabulary, grammar, form, and structural and organisational features, including rhetorical devices, to reflect audience, purpose and context, and using Standard English where appropriate
- make notes, draft and write, including using information provided by others [e.g. writing a letter from key points provided; drawing on and using information from a presentation]
- revise, edit and proof-read through:
 - reflecting on whether their draft achieves the intended impact
 - restructuring their writing, and amending its grammar and vocabulary to improve coherence, consistency, clarity and overall effectiveness
 - paying attention to the accuracy and effectiveness of grammar, punctuation and spelling.¹

Grammar and vocabulary

Pupils should be taught to:

- consolidate and build on their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary through:
 - studying their effectiveness and impact in the texts they read
 - drawing on new vocabulary and grammatical constructions from their reading and listening, and using these consciously in their writing and speech to achieve particular effects
 - analysing some of the differences between spoken and written language, including differences associated with formal and informal registers, and between Standard English and other varieties of English

¹ Spelling patterns and guidance are set out in Appendix 1 to the key stage 1 and 2 programmes of study for English.

- using linguistic and literary terminology accurately and confidently in discussing reading, writing and spoken language.

Spoken English

Pupils should be taught to:

- speak confidently, audibly and effectively, including through:
 - using Standard English when the context and audience require it
 - working effectively in groups of different sizes and taking on required roles, including leading and managing discussions, involving others productively, reviewing and summarising, and contributing to meeting goals/deadlines
 - listening to and building on the contributions of others, asking questions to clarify and inform, and challenging courteously when necessary
 - planning for different purposes and audiences, including selecting and organising information and ideas effectively and persuasively for formal spoken presentations and debates
 - listening and responding in a variety of different contexts, both formal and informal, and evaluating content, viewpoints, evidence and aspects of presentation
 - improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact.

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