

SECOND EDITION

colons

semi-colons

adjectives

nouns

full stops

Grammar Survival

vocabulary

A teacher's toolkit



composition

subordination

conditionals

text-types

language

cohesion

clauses

active

passive

reading

A David Fulton Book

GEOFF BARTON

Grammar Survival

A Teacher's Toolkit

SECOND EDITION

Geoff Barton

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Introduction

Underpinning assumptions

Many of us were taught very little, formally, about English grammar at school. What knowledge we have was frequently picked up from lessons in French or German. As a result, there is a generation of pupils, and now teachers, that feels insecure when it comes to knowing whether, how and to what extent we should be using grammar explicitly in our English lessons.

So this book is for you (and for me), self-taught in aspects of grammar, and fretting about the fact that you may have been too cautious in using grammar in your teaching. The book is designed to show which bits of grammar will make an impact and which we can ignore.

It is important, before we get started, to state five basic principles:

1. Knowing about grammar is important for teachers and pupils, but it isn't an end in itself. In this book I have therefore been picky: I've only gone for those bits of grammar that I think will make a difference to your pupils' reading and writing skills.
2. I've left out speaking and listening but that doesn't mean it's not important. In fact, we know that some pupils won't significantly improve their writing skills if they are not using high quality talk to discuss and test out their ideas. A strong emphasis on structured speaking and listening opportunities should underpin all that you do, and giving pupils an opportunity to rehearse their ideas orally before writing appears to benefit them hugely – particularly boys. So good speaking and listening activities should pervade the English classroom.
3. Grammar shouldn't dominate your teaching: all the other stuff – talking about literature, listening to pupils, reading great texts, watching worthwhile films, exploring language, having fun – are at the core of our work as English teachers. Grammar can enhance all of this, but it doesn't replace it. We want our classrooms to be rich with language in all its forms, not a narrow set of utilitarian hoops through which our pupils dutifully jump.
4. This book is all about impact: don't teach any grammar for the sake of it (or to impress your head of department or parents). Teach what will help your pupils to become better readers, writers, speakers and thinkers – and ignore the rest.
5. Remember the importance of cross-curricular links. The compartmentalisation of English and other subjects does us few favours. Help your pupils to make connections across subjects by focusing on the reading and writing skills they will need for, say, reading a historical document or writing a technology evaluation.

This new edition of *Grammar Survival* is closely aligned to the revised Framework for English developed by the National Strategies team. It aims to help you translate that document into a template for lively, informative and productive lessons; but it's not in any way an official guide. Rather, it's the stuff that I've learned and used in my own teaching over the years. I have therefore chosen the bits of the Framework that I think need most explanation and will have the most impact in class. I have also included a few other topics that I think are important, such as how to make texts more accessible for pupils and simple guidance on various conventions of punctuation.

Overall I've given particular emphasis to grammar for writing because it is the area that, as a profession, we have been least effective in teaching. There is also a glossary and a list of recommended reading.

Approaching grammar

In recent years we have learnt that good writing arises out of good reading linked to good quality speaking and listening. So we need an integrated approach that also focuses very explicitly on the skills we are aiming to develop. In practice, this means:

- helping pupils to know the conventions of the text-type they are being asked to write (e.g. knowing that a literature essay is usually written in the present tense and avoids the personal pronouns "I" and "me") and giving them models of these texts.
- giving pupils a chance to see the teacher writing and being able to comment on the vocabulary and grammatical choices we are making (many pupils see writing as a pre-packaged end-product and don't get to see the process of thinking, decision-making and correction it entails);
- undertaking shared composition in small stages;
- talking about the decisions about words, phrases and structures pupils have made;
- working from dependence on the teacher to independence.

So, in our teaching we should aim to give plenty of emphasis to:

- shared reading and writing in which we demonstrate and model the process of comprehension or composition with the whole class;
- guided reading and writing in which we dedicate substantial time in the lesson to stretching and supporting a particular group;
- using plenaries to consolidate the learning objectives;
- planning investigations in which pupils explore language and work out rules and conventions. We want them to enjoy exploring language directly and actively, not to feel it is something with endless rules that have to be learnt, memorised and dutifully recited.

I have also included quite a bit of guidance about teaching punctuation because, in my experience, pupils really benefit from seeing how the conventions of punctuation are linked to clarity and subtlety of meaning: being good at using punctuation makes us more effective writers.

Conclusion

When I started writing I tried to write a serious book about grammar, but it was too sombre and too formal. I soon gave up and wrote the kind of book I wished was available when I trained to teach English some 25 years ago. I hope you find it useful, illuminating and really practical. Most of all, I hope you see your pupils make real progress and, at the same time, develop their passion for English and language.

Geoff Barton
June 2009

How to generate ideas

This new writing strand in the Framework for English contains an important concept: “generating ideas”. It’s a reminder that writing isn’t simply about products or finished articles, which is the way it can seem to our pupils. For many of them, writing is something that is served up to them complete and pre-packaged, in the form of worksheets, textbooks, handouts and leaflets. They don’t see the process that leads up to the finished product.

Academics like Richard Andrews, Professor at the London Institute of Education, has urged English teachers to focus more on composition, on how writers get their ideas in the first place.

Suddenly it’s obvious that we should always have given more emphasis to this. Ask any class to write anything – however tedious the topic might seem (think about those GCSE writing tasks which ask pupils to “describe the room you are in”) – and watch what happens. Some pupils will sit and think and then begin to write; others will sit and struggle to think of anything.

We need to reassure pupils that writing is not some mystical gift, with some people born creative and others not. Instead, there are techniques that we can all use that will help us to generate ideas before we begin to write.

In our teaching it means making some of these techniques more explicit and, crucially, getting those pupils who are most effective in coming up with ideas to explain how they do it, what their thought processes are, how they use memories, cross-references to films and stories, and how they rely on techniques to get them going.

How to generate ideas

BEFORE THE LESSON

Focusing on composition will prove liberating for many pupils, helping them to see that there are techniques they can use for generating ideas. But it's not a one-off activity. Any time you're setting up a writing task, start before the planning and drafting stage. Get pupils to think and talk about how they will generate ideas, so that the process begins to become second nature to them.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Make the topic explicit with a class: "Ever been asked to write something and not known how to get started? Well, today and over the next few lessons we're going to explore how to generate ideas."

Set pupils a deliberately boring task: "describe this room" or "describe a memory from your childhood". Give them three minutes to write something and then collect the pieces in. Read a few out anonymously, asking pupils to comment on elements they hear that work particularly well.

Ask some pupils to describe how they approached the task, where they got their ideas from. Then begin to catalogue on a whiteboard some ideas that the class comes up with and that you slip into the discussion – for example:

- Try starting with a question ("Why do I still remember that wet day in the caravan?").
- Try starting with a sensuous description using sound, smell, sight, taste, touch ("the whiff of the Calor gas was filling the caravan").
- Avoid using an obvious opening ("The room is big") and aim instead for something unexpected ("Peeling posters, a ticking clock, a feeling of boredom – this is the room I am in").
- Start with a quotation or some dialogue ("Time starts now," barked Miss Upton from the front of the room).
- Play around with narrative voice – first, second or third person (e.g. "You didn't notice the clock ticking, did you? You were lost in your memories ...").

Pupils might also talk of how they refer to films, stories or other sources of ideas. Again, get them describing the process to one another.

FOLLOW-ON

The idea behind all of this is not to come up with a narrowly formulaic approach but rather to give pupils a range of techniques they might try when being asked to write. Use starter activities to get pupils practising the process, and don't confine it to writing description or stories. Pupils will benefit from the same collaborative emphasis on generating ideas in other genres, such as persuasive and instructional writing.

How to plan and draft

Many of us who have been teaching English for a long time were trained to give strong emphasis in our teaching to redrafting. Redrafting, we were told, was what “real” writers did, and our pupils needed to learn to do the same.

In hindsight this seems a bit of a cul-de-sac. Too often we would spend lessons endlessly redrafting a piece of coursework only to discover that the actual changes between the first and final draft were minimal and largely cosmetic – spelling tinkered with, occasional words crossed out or changed. Substantial structural changes were rare, especially (and understandably) if pupils were not working on a word processor.

Now we realise that time is often better spent in class planning – thinking about what we will say, how we will say it, how we will organise our ideas, and practising with a small amount of text rather than writing the whole piece and then redrafting it.

It is important also not to impose any single approach to planning on our pupils. Just as we learn in different ways, so we will each have our own preferences for the way we plan. Some of us like a chaotic approach, scribbling down ideas in a random, messy way from which we whip up a sense of purpose; others like meticulous lists of points or mind maps or spider diagrams. Our role as teachers is to provide a menu of ideas and then give pupils the opportunity to test out and then internalise the approaches that work best for them.

How to plan and draft

BEFORE THE LESSON

Make planning and drafting an explicit focus of your teaching. Start from pupils' existing knowledge: what have they already been taught about how to plan their writing? Which approaches do they most often use? What do they understand by the term "drafting"? The idea, therefore, isn't to teach a single model of planning but instead to get pupils practising and then deciding on the approach that suits them best.

PLANNING

Planning means thinking ahead to **what** you want to say.

- Jot down key ideas, words, phrases, sentences.
- You could use a mind map, spider diagram, bullet point lists, random lists which you then number to show the order of key ideas.

Think about **how** you want to say it:

- Who is the text aimed at? Do they already know about the subject?
- How will you address your audience? Will you be personal ("I") or impersonal?
- Will your language be formal or informal?
- Which connectives will be really useful in joining your ideas together (e.g. "then, next, although, as, however, because ...")?

Even this simple exploration of ideas will encourage more focused writing by pupils.

DRAFTING

Get pupils to draft the first sentence in their heads and to try it out orally with a neighbour. Doing this really helps to build confidence in both style and content. Then get them to draft a first sentence, then a first paragraph. Again, get them to ask a partner for feedback. Getting these early stages right will eliminate the need to write the whole text out in rough in many cases, so long as pupils have a skeleton plan of what they intend to write.

FOLLOW-ON

Remember that this isn't a one-off; it's part of a long-term approach to developing pupils' understanding of a holistic approach to writing. In doing so, they will see that writing starts with generating ideas, then planning and drafting, and then starting to move from dependence on the teacher to independence. It is an approach that should underpin our ongoing approach to developing their writing skills and confidence.

Teaching text-types: Instructions

We will only write effective instructions if we know what good instructions look like. Here is a checklist of key ingredients:

Purpose: to instruct how something should be done through a series of sequenced steps

Structure (text level):

- opening statement should indicate *How to...*
- written chronologically (the order in which events take place)
- clear sequence marked by bullet points, numbers, letters, etc.
- often includes a diagram or illustration

Language features (word and sentence level):

- imperative verbs in present tense
- sentences short, covering one instruction only
- any connective words will relate to the order in which things happen, e.g. next, then, when
- focus on generalised human agents rather than on named individuals
- adjectives/adverbs used only to be specific, e.g. “connect the *brown* wire to the battery”

Teaching text-types: Instructions

BEFORE THE LESSON

Essential to writing good instructions are clarity, precision and the need to tailor your language to the audience.

Get pupils to collect examples of different instructional texts, e.g.:

- recipes
- leaflets
- instruction manuals
- self-help books
- packaging.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Use the range of texts to draw out some general principles – the conventions of instructional texts.

Use drama to focus on the effect of imperative verbs. Get pupils to think of the commands they might give in different situations. Get them to give instructions to one another in pairs, emphasising the way imperative verbs tend to be placed at the start of sentences (“Walk four paces forward. Stop. Turn left ...”). Get them to find imperative verb forms in recipe books. Compare different styles, e.g. more descriptive (Nigel Slater) with more functional (Donna Hay).

Debate the appropriate format – paragraphs of instructions, bullet points, numbered instructions. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type?

Get all pupils to write instructions on the same topic, e.g. cleaning teeth, to reinforce the conventions. Compare the different styles. Draw out key learning points, e.g. generalised human agents (“Add toothpaste” rather than “You should now add toothpaste”).

LEARNING REVIEW

Get pupils assessing their own and others’ finished instructions.

Ask another class to read them and give feedback.

Give the readers a detailed summary of conventions and ask them to rate each ingredient so that feedback is specific and focused.

Teaching text-types: Recount

Recounts are reports told in chronological order. Pupils need familiarity with the genre in order to write effective recounts of their own. Here are some of the key ingredients:

Purpose: to retell events

Structure (text level):

- opening statement that “sets the scene”
- events recounted in the order they occurred
- paragraphs divided to show changes of time, place and focus
- should say: when it happened; where it happened; who did it; what happened

Language features (word and sentence level):

- written in first (autobiography) or third person (biography)
- written in past tense
- connectives will relate to time, cause or contrast (see connectives chart), e.g. *at first, eventually, because, whereas*
- focus on individuals or group participants, e.g. “we”, “I”
- adjectives and adverbs used to add dramatic effect

Teaching text-types: Recount

BEFORE THE LESSON

Recounts cover a range of styles. They might be:

- a report of an event;
- an extract from an autobiography;
- a factual account;
- a retelling of a familiar story in a different genre (e.g. newspaper report).

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Pupils need to think about the audience. Much follows from this – how much detail to give; what tone to use; how formal/informal to be.

In a report, the opening statement may be a topic sentence which says something about who, what, where and when: “A 24-year old man was arrested by West Midlands police on suspicion of robbery yesterday.”

Some recounts will aim for a more circumspect opening that aims for drama rather than factual accuracy: “It was supposed to be just another school ski trip to Austria. In fact, it turned into an Alpine fiasco.”

Get pupils exploring use of descriptive writing, choosing adjectives and adverbs carefully (rather than piling up too many).

Explore different connectives in order to avoid a predictable sequence of “then ... next day ... later”.

LEARNING REVIEW

Pupils should explore the conventions of recounts and reflect on the decisions they made in their own work.

Get them to review the approach they took, commenting in specific terms on the strengths and weaknesses of their own work.

Teaching text-types: Explanation

To explain ideas and concepts clearly in writing is an important skill. This unit maps out the key ingredients in effective explanations.

Purpose: to explain how or why something works/happens

Structure (text level):

- general statement to introduce the topic
- written step-by-step until explanation is finished
- paragraphs constructed with an opening point and then further details or evidence to illustrate or support the opening point
- final statement sums up the main points that have been made

Language features (word and sentence level):

- can be written in past or present tense.
- connectives will relate to time, cause or comparison (see connectives chart), e.g. *at first, from that point, as a result, similarly*.
- use adjectives/adverbs only to be specific, e.g. their ships were *smaller* and *more manoeuvrable*.

Teaching text-types: Explanation

BEFORE THE LESSON

Explanation texts tell us how something works. Here are some examples:

- A science textbook explains a scientific process.
- A history fact sheet tells us why a particular event happened.
- A technology guide explains how something is built.

Notice that explanation isn't the same as instructions. It isn't telling us how to make something; it's telling us how it is made. Therefore statements rather than commands are given ("The tanks were designed to be quickly reversed ..." rather than "Reverse your tank by ...").

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Get pupils to collect examples of explanations. Get as wide a range as possible, including internet guides and science and history books for children.

Ask the school librarian to help gather sample texts. Use the opportunity to make connections with other subjects. Look, for example, at explanation texts from History or Science.

Get pupils to reflect on the 'hardest' topic they study in another subject and to find examples of texts which have been (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful at explaining the topic. What are the key features of the effective texts?

Set pupils a research project to gather examples of the conventions. Are the texts written in past or present tense? How can you tell who their audience is? What do the writers do to make their explanations clear?

Get pupils to report back their findings, producing a checklist of key features for display. Set them a challenge: to explain how an internet search engine works. Aim it at users who are unfamiliar with the internet.

Remember the importance of shared composition: working with the class, put together a sample paragraph and emphasise some of its key features.

LEARNING REVIEW

Once pupils have created their own explanation text, get them to reflect on the decisions they made. You might give them a series of opening sentences which they complete:

To make the design of my text clear I decided to ...	The effect of this was ...
To make the explanation clear, I decided to ...	The effect of this was ...
With tense, I chose to ...	The effect of this was ...
With vocabulary I chose to ...	The effect of this was ...

Also important, of course, is for pupils to get feedback on their text from a detached user. Ask pupils in a different class to review them, or involve parents in reviewing them and filling in a checklist of strengths and areas to develop.

Put together a display of the outstanding explanation texts and ask a couple of pupils to annotate the display, highlighting for all readers the essential ingredients of explanation texts.

Teaching text-types: Persuasion

Persuasive texts – whether articles, leaflets or speeches – often prove to be the text-type pupils find most demanding, partly because they are unfamiliar with the various genres. Once again, building their awareness of the conventions into their planning will be essential to creating good writing. Here are the key ingredients:

Purpose: to argue the case for a point of view

Structure (text level):

- thesis – opening statement, e.g. *Vegetables are good for you*
- arguments – one per paragraph, often in the form of a point of view plus further elaboration e.g. *they contain vitamins. Vitamin C is vital for...*
- summary of main arguments and restatement of opening position, e.g. *We have seen that... so...*

Language features (word and sentence level):

- written in present tense
- focus is on generic participants not on individuals.
- connectives are related to logic, e.g. *this shows, because, therefore, in fact.*
- adjectives and adverbs are used for emotive/rhetorical effect.

Teaching text-types: Persuasion

BEFORE THE LESSON

When we think of persuasive writing, it's easy to fall back on the same old genres – adverts and speeches. In fact, pupils should also critically explore other texts that are designed to persuade – for example:

- newspaper editorials
- magazine advertorials (written to look like articles but funded by the advertiser)
- packaging – e.g. the back of breakfast cereals
- polemical poetry
- campaign leaflets from political parties
- websites from charities and pressure groups

TEACHING APPROACHES

It might be that different groups of pupils – grouped by ability, interest, gender or a mix of talents – each work on a different category of persuasive writing. Each group could then report back on some of the key features of the genre, such as:

- How does this text try to draw the reader on to the writer's side?
- Does it address the reader directly? How? If not, why not?
- What are the main arguments the writer uses?

These are "big" questions. Other questions specifically explore language features:

- What tense does the writer choose?
- What emotive words did you find?
- Which were the most important connectives for linking ideas?

Use starters and small-group activities to work on key aspects of the text-type, such as adjectives and adverbs (often important in these texts because they help to shape our emotional response).

Create a paragraph of a persuasive leaflet aimed at getting pupils to eat more adventurously at lunchtime. Compose together a version without adjectives and adverbs. Then share ideas about adjectives that might help to make your persuasive case (healthy, fresh, delicious) and adverbs (healthily, extremely, amazingly).

LEARNING REVIEW

Get pupils reflecting not only on what they have learnt about the text-type (always going back to the conventions) but also on the role they have played in their group:

Date	My role was...	My contribution was good because...	My friend's comment was...	I could improve my speaking and listening by...

Key words/ideas:

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| active part | ask questions to develop ideas | attentive |
| clear | choice of words | confident |
| expression | formal | interest the listener |
| standard English | | |

Teaching text-types: Discursive writing

Discursive writing is persuasive writing in a specific form – often an essay designed to make a balanced case that concludes with a clear opinion. It is perhaps the most academic and least familiar genre for many pupils. Yet they will be required to use a form of it in many subjects.

Purpose: to present arguments and information from differing viewpoints

Structure (text level):

- opening statement of the issue with a preview of the main arguments
- each paragraph contains the statement of one argument, for or against, followed by supporting evidence.

Or:

- each paragraph contains one argument with some supporting evidence followed by a counter-argument and supporting evidence
- quotations used to support arguments/points
- final statement will sum up and draw conclusions from arguments made and may include writer's own recommendation or opinion.

Language features (word and sentence level):

- written in present tense
- connectives relate to logic, e.g. *however, therefore, for example*
- connectives relate to contrast/comparison, e.g. *whereas, compared with, similarly, moreover*
- phrases to indicate the use of evidence, e.g. *This is supported by the fact that...; this shows that...; as in...*
- adjectives and adverbs will be used when value judgements are being made

Teaching text-types: Discursive writing

BEFORE THE LESSON

Discursive writing used to be a staple of English lessons, with essays like “What are the arguments for and against animal experimentation?” or “How far do you agree that school uniform improves academic standards?”

Assignments like these were useful if they introduced pupils to debating skills (something every English Department should get pupils involved in).

At their worst, discursive essays can be mechanical (“In this essay I will look at the arguments for and against the topic; then I will summarise the main points and give my opinion.”), so the challenge is to teach pupils to structure ideas clearly whilst also writing with passion and flair.

TEACHING APPROACHES

Sunday newspapers are full of opinion pieces. Get pupils reading them, debating, mapping out their structure, looking at how balanced they are (if they are), so that conventions are being hammered out.

Structure is essential to good discursive writing. Two possibilities are show below:

Plodding	Adventurous
Introduction	Introduction (using quotations, facts or an anecdote to catch the reader’s attention)
Points <i>for</i> the argument	Argument 1 – for/against
Points <i>against</i> the argument	Argument 2 – for/against
Conclusion	Argument 3 – for/against
	Conclusion – writer’s own view

Your teaching will need to focus on some of the essential stylistic points of discursive writing: how to use supporting evidence (e.g. quotations embedded in the writer’s sentences rather than pasted in as separate slabs, and always followed by further comment); active exploration of connectives (write a sample paragraph that only uses and/but/then/so: get pupils improving it); how to remain impersonal and detached, perhaps only introducing personal pronouns in the final paragraph.

LEARNING REVIEW

Focus on the specific language skills that define the conventions of persuasive texts. Ask pupils to reflect on their progress in some of these areas, perhaps like this:

Key words: 1 = not yet achieved 2 = achieved but not consistently 3 = achieved consistently

Skill	Progress: 1 2 3	Example
Using the introduction to: (a) grab the reader’s attention (b) set out the main case		
Using connectives that signal to the reader the direction of your argument		
Using emotive vocabulary		
Supporting points with evidence		
Providing a paragraph that sums up the case		

Teaching text-types: Evaluation

Pupils sometimes assume that evaluation means ‘giving an opinion’. We need to teach them that effective evaluation texts (as used in other subjects such as Science and Technology) often describe processes and decisions that were made, and that they often aim to avoid being too personal. To write a good evaluation, pupils need to encounter some models and to see their teachers demonstrating the writing process.

Purpose: to record the strengths/weaknesses of a performance/product

Structure (text level):

- opening statement contains value judgement in answer to a question, e.g. *How well did your construction work?*
- can be written in list form with bullet points, numbers or letters
- subheadings may be used to focus attention of the writer.
- paragraphs should contain statement of strengths or weaknesses with evidence to support statements.
- summary will sum up strengths and weaknesses and may be followed by targets for future.

Language features (word and sentence level):

- written in first person (“I” or “we”)
- written in past tense to reflect on performance; in present to reflect on personal/group characteristics; future for target-setting
- connectives relate to comparison/contrast, e.g. *although, however, still, on the other hand*, or cause and effect, e.g. *because, since, therefore, as a result*.
- phrases used for commentary, e.g. *we felt that, it seemed as if, we might have, I thought that*.

Teaching text-types: Evaluation

BEFORE THE LESSON

Evaluation is an important text-type in many subjects other than English, such as Science and Technology. It is also, traditionally, an area of weakness, with pupils sometimes lacking sufficient guidance on how to write an effective evaluation.

To explore the text-type you could look at a range of texts that evaluate products and performances, for example:

- newspaper and magazine surveys comparing products (*Which?* surveys; *The Independent's* weekly "50 Best" feature);
- reviews of plays, films and music presented in newspapers in a range of formats;
- online comparisons of different electrical products;
- examples from Science and Technology of pupils' evaluations.

TEACHING APPROACHES

Pupils sometimes assume that an evaluation is all about giving an opinion. In fact, structurally, an evaluative text is likely to give 75 per cent of its space to description ("the product is... the performance began with... the design has various features..."), with any personal opinion towards the end ("I was impressed by...").

Structure is therefore important and pupils would benefit from seeing the overall shape of a text mapped out visually.

It might be that a good and bad model text would also help. Bad models can help us to see what to do more powerfully than good models, which can simply intimidate us with their quality. The opening of a bad evaluation in Technology would be: "I enjoyed making this design for a CD holder. It was a lot of fun, though I found it difficult to get started. The best bit of my design is the use of colour...".

Get pupils taking a small sample and reworking it, making the style more impersonal by removing the personal pronouns; adding structure through subheadings, topic sentences and connectives; focusing on the product ("The design was... The colours are... The texture is...") and leaving personal commentary to the end.

LEARNING REVIEW

Reviews of performances need real audiences: get them published in a school magazine or newsletter or on a display board somewhere beyond the territory of the English department.

Get pupils to comment on and annotate their own evaluations. If you have been working on evaluations for other subjects, bring in a friendly Science and Technology teacher and ask them to give feedback to the class, focusing on specific points of style. This sends out a powerful whole-school message about the importance of reading and writing across the curriculum.

How to develop viewpoint, voice and ideas

This learning objective is presented in the Framework for English as having two main areas for development – one relating to literary texts and the other to non-literary texts. Here's a sample of what is required from pupils in Year 9:

- Establish and sustain distinctive character, point of view and voice in their fiction writing by drawing on a wide range of techniques and devices used by writers.
- Establish and sustain a clear and logical personal viewpoint through the analysis and selection of convincing evidence, opinions and appropriate information, and other techniques used by writers to meet the purpose of the task

In practice it means making explicit the techniques and conventions used by writers of fiction and non-fiction. Rather than presenting pupils with a pre-prepared list of the techniques such writers use, here is an opportunity to build a lesson which links reading to writing, approaching a written text (say a short story) with an enquiring approach that asks questions like: Who is telling this story – is it the voice of the author or of a character? How can you tell? Which character in the story do we get to know best? How? Which character do we feel most sympathy or liking for? How? Which do we know least?

Teasing out what pupils notice and then asking them to apply their knowledge in their own writing will enable them to explore how the techniques work. The suggested approach opposite takes a familiar story – *Little Red Riding Hood* – and gets pupils applying different techniques to it so that they put their skills into practice.

How to develop viewpoint, voice and ideas

BEFORE THE LESSON

Exploring writers' techniques needs a rich diet of reading to underpin it. Since the objective focuses so strongly on writers' techniques – *how* rather than *what* they write – take the “what” out of the activity by presenting pupils with a story they will all know well. A nursery rhyme or fairy tale would work well, allowing pupils to experiment with the way the story can be told by changing voice and viewpoint.

Here's how it might work with *Little Red Riding Hood*. Treat it as a kind of writing workshop, perhaps with different groups of pupils working on different versions of the story, testing out different devices.

Approaching the objective:

- Group 1: Tell the opening of the story from the viewpoint of Little Red Riding Hood. She's in her mother's house preparing to step into the forest, then to travel and see Grandma. Write in the first person (“I”) to show her thoughts and feelings. Use the past tense. Use detail to show what she is seeing, hearing, smelling. Write the first paragraph or two.
- Group 2: Try telling the story from the viewpoint of the wolf in the forest. To make it sinister, write as though he is watching Little Red Riding Hood, using the second person voice to create a voyeuristic feeling. Try using short sentences to build suspense. You might begin: “You didn't realise you were being watched, did you?”
- Group 3: Tell the story in the third person, omniscient (all-seeing) voice (using the pronouns *he*, *she* and *they*). This is the way fairy tales are usually told; but your job is to make us feel sympathy for the wolf and dislike for Little Red Riding Hood and the woodcutter. You might explore how you could make Little Red Riding Hood seem arrogant and aloof; show how the wolf has been humiliated and treated badly in his past; and how the woodcutter thinks rather too highly of himself. Try to *show* us all this rather than telling us.

Pupils work on their section and then present their approach, telling the class what they were aiming to achieve and how far they have succeeded. The activity then allows exploration of how a fragmented narrative might work – telling the story using each of those approaches. Paragraph one describes Little Red Riding Hood's day from her viewpoint; paragraph two switches to the wolf's viewpoint; paragraph three to a third-person account of the woodcutter at the other side of the forest; paragraph four back to Little Red Riding Hood's viewpoint as she leaves the house, and so on.

Ask pupils to write their fairy tale and then a one-paragraph commentary on the techniques they used and how well they feel their story works.

Teaching about sentences

THEORY

Defining what a sentence is is not as simple as we would think. In fact, sentences can prove surprisingly slippery to pin down. However, if pupils are to have success in their writing across any subject, they will need a good working understanding of what sentences are and how they can be used imaginatively.

Three key ingredients of sentences are:

- A sentence makes sense. It is grammatical.
- It can stand alone.
- It contains a verb or verb chain.



The fly buzzed around my ear.
I walked into the room.
I walked.



Around buzzed the fly my ear.
I walked into.
Walked.

The use of the term “verb chain” is useful. It refers to the collection of words built around the verb to show tense. Here are different verb chains:

- I have walked into the room.
- I am walking into the room.
- I was walking into the room.
- I used to walk into the room.

Of course, writers will sometimes use **verbless** sentences deliberately in texts to create an impact:

- The night fell. *Hideously quickly.*

They are also common in signs, greetings and advertising:

- No smoking
- Hello
- The ultimate driving machine

You will need to know about:

- simple, compound and complex sentences;
- the importance of sentence variety.

The next spreads (pp. 24–35) will help to build your knowledge.

Teaching about sentences

BEFORE THE LESSON

It is important not to see sentences as a one-off 'quick hit'. A single lesson will not, in itself, help pupils to use sentences consistently. Therefore plan to teach, re-teach and reinforce the knowledge, through starter activities, reminders when setting up written assignments and in your marking.

STARTERS

Sometimes a reassuring approach to grammar is to use "bad" rather than "good" models. They can reassure pupils. So get them to think up nonsense sentences – sentences that cannot be classified as sentences because they simply do not make sense, like these:

- On station man I saw the a.
- Mum my home at TV sat watching.
- The at back house of the.

Make it a game, where pupils in small groups untangle the nonsense sentences to decide whether they can make each nonsense sentence into a real sentence. Get them to hold up a green card (or any green object, such as a pencil case or book) if they can and a red card (or item) if they cannot.

Flash each nonsense sentence on to an OHP or whiteboard. Give pupils 20 seconds to decide whether it makes sense or not.

The next stage is to encourage pupils to try to describe why a sentence does not make sense, so you could give them labels:

A: This doesn't make sense at all.

B: This is a phrase, not a sentence.

C: This isn't a sentence because it doesn't contain a verb chain (a minor sentence).

Get them categorising their responses like this, sharpening their ability to recognise sentences, minor sentences (no verb chain) and non-sentences.

RESEARCH

Focus on the way advertising slogans use sentences. Encourage pupils to collect as many examples as possible and then, again, to categorise them as sentences or minor sentences. You can find lots of examples by using a search engine and typing in "famous advertising slogans".

Teaching about clauses

We can't really understand sentences without knowing about clauses. This is a part of grammar which sometimes scares people, especially terms like "subordinate clauses", but in fact it's straightforward. Clauses are the building blocks of sentences. They always contain a verb. Sometimes clauses can stand alone (finite clause) and sometimes they only make sense as part of a larger sentence (non-finite clauses). Some examples:

Finite clauses (can stand on their own and make sense)	Non-finite clauses (only make sense as part of a larger sentence)
She eats salad.	eating her salad
He cried softly.	crying softly
He was obsessed by her.	obsessed by her

There are two types of clause: co-ordinated and subordinated. Co-ordinated clauses link ideas together giving them equal status. They use co-ordinating conjunctions like "and" or "or":

I like fish and I like cheese.

You can see these are equal status, with neither idea being more important than the other. You could write it as: "I like cheese and I like fish".

SUBORDINATE CLASSES

These clauses give us background information to the main clause. In these examples the subordinate clause is highlighted:

I like cheese *although I eat too much of it*.

Because I like cheese, I eat lots of it.

After eating too much cheese, I felt ill.

You need to know about clauses because they will help you to teach pupils how to create sentence variety.

Teaching about clauses

BEFORE THE LESSON

Be clear in your own mind what the objective is. Pupils need to know about clauses as building blocks of sentences. The aim is to improve their own writing, not simply to be able to spot types of clauses. Most useful would be for them to distinguish between co-ordinated clauses (joined by “and”, “but” and “or”) and subordinate clauses. It is subordinate clauses that will give most depth and variety to their writing.

READING

Ask pupils to look at two contrasting texts, one written entirely as simple sentences, the other as a long sequence of co-ordinated clauses. Which do they prefer? Why? What is the effect of each style? What would they think of a text that was written mostly in this style?

Simple sentences	Co-ordinated clauses in compound sentences
I went to the zoo. I saw lots of animals. Some were big. Some were small. Some were smelly. I had an ice cream. I fell over. I came home.	I went to the zoo and I saw lots of animals. Some were big and some were small but some were smelly. I had an ice cream and I fell over.

Set pupils the challenge of making the two texts more interesting by using some subordinating connectives:

because until when although where since
 as unless after if while in order to rather than

Remind pupils that that some of these connectives may work at the start of sentences as well as in the middle. Remember that at this stage we want pupils to explore the effect and to build their own language confidence, so respond positively to new sentences.

Teaching about sentence variety

Sentence variety is an essential element in good writing: it is possibly the most important skill we can teach our pupils if they are to become really effective writers.

What you need to know:

- Sentences are made up of clauses, which are units of words that are smaller than sentences built around verbs or verb chains.
- Simple sentences contain just one clause.
- Compound sentences consist of two or more main clauses loosely joined by co-ordinating conjunctions – *and, but, or*.
- Complex sentences consist of two or more clauses – a main clause (which carries the main meaning of the sentence) and subordinate clauses (which carry the background information).

All of these are explained more fully in this and the next few spreads (pp. 28–35).

Teaching about sentence variety

BEFORE THE LESSON

Don't see this topic as a 'quick hit'. Plan a sequence of activities that allows pupils to explore sentence types in depth. Lively and varied teaching and learning approaches are essential, so remember:

- direction: to ensure pupils know what they are doing, and why;
- demonstration: to show pupils how effective readers and writers work;
- modelling: to explain the rules and conventions of language and texts;
- scaffolding: to support pupils' early efforts and build security and confidence;
- explanation: to clarify and exemplify the best ways of working;
- questioning: to probe, draw out or extend pupils' thinking;
- exploration: to encourage critical thinking and generalisation;
- investigation: to encourage enquiry and self-help;
- discussion: to shape and challenge developing ideas;
- reflection and evaluation: to help pupils to learn from experience, successes and mistakes.

In practice, this might mean:

- A sequence of starter activities in which pupils explore, rewrite or categorise different types of sentences.
- They could separate simple from complex sentences.
- They might respond to a text written entirely in simple sentences, with one group rewriting it in compound sentences (clauses joined by *and*, *but* and *or*); another looking at rewriting it with complex sentences.
- They could gather examples of signs and slogans, deciding which are sentences and which are minor sentences (no verbs).
- They might compare texts written for different audiences or ages – for example, a story for a three-year old vs a story for a 13-year old, comparing the sentence types in the opening paragraphs.

Starter activities are an ideal way to keep revisiting the topic, building confidence, investigating different aspects of the subject and really embedding different structures in your pupils' minds. Also, keep relating sentence types to their context – to the decisions writers make according to their purpose and audience. Compare sentence types in different newspapers; produce charts of your findings; and take a genuinely exploratory approach in order to build pupils' confidence and familiarity with the subject

Teaching about simple sentences

THEORY

A simple sentence has a **subject** and a **verb** (or verb chain). There may be other elements in the sentence, but as long as there is only one verb or verb chain it is a **simple sentence**:

The dog **barked**.
The baby **woke up**.
The dog **whined**.

Simple sentences are important for adding sentence variety. It is a striking fact that grade A* writers use more simple sentences than those writing at grade C – so we need to encourage our pupils to use them judiciously, aware of the impact they can make.

There are two main areas of knowledge that you need:

- (a) how simple sentences can be expanded in a number of ways

You can change the verb chain, like this:

The dog **barked**.
The dog **was barking**.
The dog **has barked**.
The dog **was going to bark**.

You can add adjectives before the noun, adverbs around the verb, and a prepositional phrase:

The dog **barked**.
The **old** dog **barked loudly in the street**.

- (b) The stylistic effects of simple sentences

They add clarity and precision. They can simplify complicated texts, especially if used at the beginning and end of sentences. They can build suspense in stories.

However, they can also become repetitive and monotonous if used too frequently.

Teaching about simple sentences

BEFORE THE LESSON

Focus on really defining for pupils what simple sentences are. Plan activities that show the range of simple sentences – some of which can be very short (“I am alone”) and others longer (“I am here alone tonight in the dark, creepy house on the estate”). Simple sentences are not, in other words, just a matter of length.

ACTIVITIES TO BUILD THIS CONFIDENCE

Get pupils actively exploring ways of expanding simple sentences – for example through collaborative starter activities. Here are some examples:

- Pupils might look at the way simple sentences create order and clarity in instructions – for example:

First clean up the fish. Put it to one side. Mix the flour, salt and pepper together in a bowl.
Add a pinch of cayenne pepper.

- They might look at the way simple sentences build tension in fiction – for example:

He waited. There was nothing there. Where were they? Why were they late? He listened.
Again, there was no sound.

- They might explore the use of simple sentences at the start and end of paragraphs – for example:

Macbeth begins as a hero. Although later in the play we will see his dark and merciless acts,
at this stage in the play he ...

- They might experiment with ways of expanding simple sentences using adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases – for example:

Macbeth is a hero
Macbeth is as a *brave and worthy* hero (added adjectives)
Macbeth is initially a hero (added adverb)
Macbeth is a hero *at the start of the play* (added prepositional phrase)

All of these remain simple sentences, but each has been modified in a different way.

Teaching about compound sentences

The simplest way to link simple sentences together is to use a co-ordinating conjunction (like *and* or *but*). This is what most immature writers would do:

The dog barked **and** the baby woke up **and** the dog whined.

We now have three clauses that are linked. Each clause is still a main clause and can stand independently of the others. Sometimes, when the subject of two or more clauses is the same, you can remove the second subject:

The dog barked **and** the dog whined.
The dog barked **and** whined.

In a compound sentence, the clauses on either side of the conjunction have equal weight: they are both main clauses. These co-ordinating conjunctions do not suggest that one clause is subordinate to the other.

Co-ordinating conjunctions include:

and
but
or

Sometimes these may be used with other linking words:

And so ... and yet ...
Not only ... but also ...

You need to know:

what a compound sentence is; and
its effect in different texts.

Too many compound sentences can feel uncontrolled and repetitive. They link ideas together easily, but can become rambling. They characterise the work of C/D borderline pupils who will benefit from exploring the effect of combining compound and simple sentences.

Teaching about compound sentences

BEFORE THE LESSON

You will want pupils to become aware of what compound sentences are, so that they are a conscious part of their grammatical toolkit. I recommend that you explicitly explore the conventions, and then keep looking at them in the context of text-types. There are examples below.

EXPLORING THE CONVENTIONS

You might give pupils a sequence of simple sentences and ask them to think about the effect of them in a text – for example:

The dog barked. It woke the baby. He cried a lot. The noise throughout the house was terrible. Then he fell asleep. It was quiet again.

To make compound sentences pupils could use *and*, *but* and *or*.

Using OHPs, different groups might explore the impact of creating long or short compound sentences, then comparing the effect of the variety – like this:

Group A: add three co-ordinating conjunctions:

The dog barked **and** it woke the baby **and** he cried a lot **and** the noise throughout the house was terrible. Then he fell asleep **and** it was quiet again.

Group B: add four co-ordinating conjunctions:

The dog barked **and** it woke the baby **and** he cried a lot **and** the noise throughout the house was terrible. Then he fell asleep **and** it was quiet again.

Group C: add five co-ordinating conjunctions:

The dog barked **and** it woke the baby **and** he cried a lot **and** the noise throughout the house was terrible **and** then he fell asleep **and** it was quiet again.

Encourage pupils to look at compound sentences in stories (children’s stories sometimes use them for a reassuring effect: “He looked and he looked, but there was no one there. They waited and waited. Again – nothing.”), and in their own writing, where using simple sentences as a contrast will probably sharpen up their writing.

Teaching about complex sentences

Complex sentences contain a main clause, plus one or more subordinate clause. The main clause carries the main information of the sentence. The subordinate clause conveys background or less important information. There are various ways of creating complex sentences and this is a simple checklist of three main types:

1 Using subordinating conjunctions:

simple subordinators (= one word)	complex subordinators (= more than one word)	correlative subordinators (= pairs of words)
although, unless, because, while, so, whereas	in order that, in case, assuming that, so that, as long as	as ...so; if...then

Although he was hungry, he didn't eat a thing.
subordinate clause (background information – main clause)
He hid the money so that he wasn't caught.
(main clause – subordinate clause)

2 Using relative pronouns who, which, that:

The fields, *which were covered in dew*, shimmered in the sunlight.
(main – subordinate (relative) clause – clause)
The woman entered the room *which was full of her enemies*.
(main clause – subordinate (relative) clause)

3 Using -ing and -ed verbs:

Walking down the street, I noticed someone was following me.
(subordinate clause – main clause)

She watched from the window, *hoping she was safe*.
(main clause – subordinate clause)

Frustrated by his lateness, she went home.
(subordinate clause – main clause)

He turned up, *delayed by a security alert*.
(main clause – subordinate clause)

Teaching about complex sentences

BEFORE THE LESSON

Teaching complex sentences is one of the most important aspects of grammar you can work on with your pupils. It has the capacity to improve their writing significantly. However, once again it isn't a quick hit. You will need to explore the different ways of creating complex sentences, to demonstrate how they work, to give pupils opportunities to practise, and then to start bedding their knowledge into their own writing.

EXPLORING THE CONVENTION

Give pupils simple sentences and get them experimenting with ways of linking any two or three of them. The weather was cold. I went out on my bike. I thought about yesterday. I wanted to forget what had happened. I rode fast. I was late. I noticed someone behind the hedge. I pedalled faster. I stopped.

You might give one group a list of subordinating conjunctions (*because, although*). Another might experiment with using relative pronouns (*who, which, that*). Another might try out linking clauses with -ing and -ed verbs.

The key is to emphasise the collaborative nature of this. Keep the tone light and experimental. If a pupil writes, "Although the day was cold, I went out on my bike", explore the effect of switching the clauses round: "I went out on my bike, although the day was cold".

WRITING

It will be important to encourage pupils to experiment with complex sentences in their next major piece of writing. You might ask them at the start of the work to write down a target – for example:

- to use a combination of simple, compound and complex sentences; or
- to use three different complex sentences on the first page.

Before they hand in their work, you might consider asking pupils to highlight these in the margin or to underline three or four examples of complex sentences they have used. This will encourage them to think explicitly about the knowledge and skills they are developing.

Teaching about subordination and co-ordination

This is included because it sometimes helps to reinforce the key differences between compound and complex sentences. You might therefore use the spread simply to reinforce your own understanding. Equally, it might help pupils who are struggling to grasp the concepts.

COMPOUND SENTENCES

Compound sentences are made up of clauses that are co-ordinated. This means that they are linked together with each clause having equal weight, like this:

I enjoy swimming and I enjoy jogging but I dislike cycling.

Clauses are linked by coordinating conjunctions:

and
but
or

COMPLEX SENTENCES

Complex sentences are made up of a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. One way that clauses are linked is by use of subordinating conjunctions. A list of these, organised by areas of meaning, is printed on the opposite page and would be useful to have on display in your classroom. Subordination is achieved in other ways, too, and the sentences below show a range of examples.

To reinforce the difference between co-ordination and subordination, think about the main clause in a complex sentence: this provides the main information. The subordinate clause(s) provides the background information. In the examples below, the subordinate clauses are in italics:

She wandered into the room, *although she felt nervous*.

Because he was so untidy, his room was a mess.

Still eating his toast, he set off for work.

The carpenter, *who arrived 15 minutes late*, looked flustered.

Flattered by her attention, he chatted for far too long.

Teaching about subordination and co-ordination

BEFORE THE LESSON

Remember that we want pupils to have a practical working knowledge of compound and complex sentences. Knowing about co-ordination and subordination is important because it will help many pupils to understand better the differences between the two sentence types and then (this is crucial) to write with more variety and flair.

STARTERS

Teach the convention that co-ordination joins clauses together giving them equal weight, whilst subordination creates main clauses and subordinate clauses. Pupils will only truly “get” this through seeing examples and spotting main and subordinate clauses for themselves. Don’t make a meal of this; just use a sequence of starters to keep building their knowledge and reinforcing their skills.

DISPLAY

Pupils will also benefit from having their attention drawn explicitly to the range of subordinating conjunctions. Use them for starter activities – getting different groups using different categories of subordinators – and make sure a list like this one is clearly on display in your classroom.

Area of meaning	Subordinating conjunction	Example
comparison	as if, as though, like	He looked at me as though he liked me.
concession	although, though, if, even if, whereas	Although she irritates me, I still like her.
condition	if, unless, in case, as long as, supposing	Supposing you were given the money, what would you do?
contrast	whereas, while, whilst	I enjoy chess, whereas you don't.
exception	except	I like cooking fish, except I often get it wrong.
place	where, wherever	You can eat wherever you want.
preference	rather than, sooner than	I'll stay here rather than go home.
proportion	as ... so, the ... the	The more I see of him, the less I like him.
purpose	to, in order to, so as to	I speeded up to get there on time.
reason	to, in order to	I switched the computer off as it was overheating.
result	so, so that	I turned the volume up so that I would drown out their noise.
similarity	as, like	I'm staying here today as I feel comfortable.
time	after, as before, since, until, when, while	He turned up after you had gone.

Teaching about expanding nouns and noun phrases

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Nouns are vital elements in texts because they carry the weight of meaning. Take a sentence like this:

At the supermarket I will buy some cheese, a cauliflower, ice cream and a carton of soup.

The nouns are conveying the main message of the sentence. We normally talk of:

- **concrete nouns** (things we can usually see and touch, such as table and phone). They are usually preceded by determiners (e.g. *the*) and take plural endings (-s).
- **abstract nouns** (concepts, such as peace and idealism)
- **proper nouns** (names of people, places and products, such as Manhattan or Lemsip). They are not often preceded by a determiner (e.g. *the Manhattan*) or a plural form (*Manhattans*).

A **noun phrase** has the noun as its “head” but may have other elements to pre-modify or post-modify it:

Pre-modification

- The supermarket (head = *supermarket*, pre-modified by the determiner *the*. Other determiners include *a, an, some, my, his, her, your, their, its*.)
- The untidy supermarket (head – *supermarket*, pre-modified by the determiner the and the adjective untidy. Other adjectives include *large, blue, elegant*.)

Post-modification

- The supermarket on the high street (head = *supermarket*, post-modified by a prepositional phrase, which is a phrase beginning with a preposition such as *in, under, at, by, through*.)
- The supermarket that I visited (head = *supermarket*, post-modified by a relative clause which starts with *that, who* or *which*.)
- The supermarket illuminated by neon signs (head = *supermarket*, post-modified by a non-finite clause, meaning a clause that cannot stand on its own.)

Pupils don't need to know the detail of this, but they do need to know how to expand noun phrases as this skill will add variety, texture and precision to their writing.

Teaching about expanding nouns and noun phrases

BEFORE THE LESSON

Be clear why this is worth teaching. Nouns carry important weight in sentences. They tell our readers and listeners a lot about the topic. Sometimes pupils' writing would benefit from greater detail and this is often done more efficiently and stylishly by expanding the noun phrase rather than writing additional sentences. It might be clearest to demonstrate this to pupils, like this:

Expanding the noun phrase	Using separate sentences
We walked to the battered old car parked down the alleyway.	We walked to the car. It was old and battered. It was parked down the alleyway.

CLARIFY THE CONVENTION

The clearest way to demonstrate the convention is to take a simple noun phrase and to get pupils thinking about what they could add before it (premodification) and after it (post-modification – like this:

The		hotel		
	haunted old dilapidated abandoned		prepositional phrases:	on the road in the woods under the starlit sky
			relative clauses:	which is shut that looks revolting
			non-finite clauses:	situated by the river raided by the police falling slowly apart

EXPLORING EFFECT

The approach here needs to be collaborative and experimental. Get pupils exploring how many adjectives can pre-modify a noun, before it feels unwieldy (e.g. the old dilapidated haunted house). Note also that adjectives can be pre-modified by adverbs: the *very/really/terribly* old house.

Teaching about the passive and active voice

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This is an area of grammar that will help your pupils to write in an appropriate style. It isn't only relevant in English; it is also useful in subjects such as Science where the distinction between the passive and active voice is often important.

The difference between the active and passive voice is perhaps best illustrated by these two examples:

Active British surgeons yesterday performed a major heart transplant operation.

Passive A major heart transplant operation was yesterday performed by British surgeons.

The passive voice shifts the agent of a clause to the end, making it seem less important. In some forms of writing this is seen as useful: it places emphasis on what happened, rather than on who did it.

In most writing we are happy to make the agent of a sentence active. But in some types of writing there is a tradition of using the active voice – for example:

Active We added potassium to the test tube.

Passive Potassium was added to the test tube.

In examples like this the “agent” (We) is unimportant. The main information is what happened. However, pupils should be taught also to be wary of the passive voice, as in this example:

Passive It was announced yesterday that asylum seekers will be subjected to more stringent tests.

This begs the question who announced it?

Pupils need to be aware of the impact of passive forms, and familiar with how to create them.

Teaching about the passive and active voice

BEFORE THE LESSON

Be clear about why you are teaching the active vs passive voice. It is relevant in the context of formal scientific writing and it would be a wasted opportunity to teach it in other situations.

EXPLORING THE CONVENTION

Get pupils comparing the difference between the active and passive voice, using examples like these:

Active	Passive
Scientists have discovered traces of ice on the surface of Mars.	Traces of ice have been discovered on the surface of Mars (by scientists).
The government is seeking a peaceful end to the dispute with fox hunters.	A peaceful end to the dispute with fox hunters is being sought (by the government).
I put magnesium into the flame.	Magnesium was added to the flame.
I damaged your car.	Your car has been damaged.

Get pupils to think about the rule – how do we make an active into a passive voice? What happens to the person who “did” the action? Why do you think people use the passive form in some contexts?

Then emphasise the conventions of changing an active to passive form; It is formed like this:

- shifting the subject to the end and adding “by”;
- shifting the object of the active verb to the front of the clause;
- replacing the active verb with a form of the auxiliary verb (be) followed by an -ed participle.

Then explore its effects:

- the passive form is often more wordy than the active voice.
- it can leave the reader confused.
- it often leaves out who the agent was (which can make the meaning more economical, or it can obscure meanings).

Teaching about tenses

Tense is the time when an action takes place. People traditionally refer to past, present and future, though (as you will see) it isn't quite so simple. Pupils need an active knowledge of tenses. We are not trying to train them simply to be able to look at a text and specify what the tense is; rather, as the Framework for English says, pupils should be taught to:

- keep tense usage consistent, and manage changes of tense so that meaning is clear (Year 7);
- explore the effects of changes in tense, e.g. past to present for vividness (Year 8);
- recognise and exploit the use of conditionals and modal verbs when speculating, hypothesising or discussing possibilities (Year 8).

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Present tense	<p>The <i>simple present</i> uses the base form of the verb, which only changes in the third person by adding -s:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I think – you think – she thinks</p> <p>There is also a <i>present continuous</i> form:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I am thinking</p>
Past tense	<p>The <i>simple past</i> is created by adding -ed to the base of regular verbs:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I hope – I hoped</p> <p>There are also various <i>irregular</i> forms:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I drink – I drank I think – I thought I go – I went</p> <p>There is the <i>past continuous</i>:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I was going</p> <p>The <i>present perfect</i> enables us to refer to things at an unspecified time:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I have seen the film. I had been there before.</p> <p>There is also the <i>present perfect continuous</i>:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I have been waiting here for hours</p>
<p>Describing the future Most grammar experts agree that there is no future tense in English. This is a bit of a technicality – unlike French we don't have a verb ending which shows the future. Instead we use verbs forms like "will", which are actually present tense forms. There are a number of ways in which we talk about the future.</p>	<p>Will/shall: I will go. I shall be pleased.</p> <p>Be going to: I am going to eat</p> <p>Modals: I may be going I might be going I shall be going</p> <p>Conditional (these express hypothetical situations):</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If the weather is nice, I walk to work. When it rains, I take the train. If you were invited, you should go.</p>

Teaching about tenses

PLANNING

You should aim to keep this topic simple. Most pupils will use tenses effectively in most of their writing. Tense is probably best explored by looking at it in the context of different text-types. As always, aim to link reading to writing, so that whilst pupils might look at a writer's choice of tense in, say, a novel or leaflet, they then actively explore the convention in their own writing.

TEXT-TYPES

Encourage pupils to discuss tense in texts they are reading. Draw attention to some conventions:

Text-type	Prevailing tense
explanation (how or why something works or happens)	present ("Hurricanes are powerful winds") or past ("their weapons were stronger")
information (non-chronological)	present ("Rats are rarely more than 3 metres away from us")
analysis (including essays)	present ("Lady Macbeth takes matters into her own hands")
persuasion	present ("Another reason for banning fishing is...")
evaluation	past for the description of the process ("First we developed the materials"); present for the reflection ("Overall I am pleased with...")
instructions	present ("Start by removing the old tyre")
recount (chronological report)	past ("First we spent some time planning the project...")

Get pupils experimenting. Try writing stories and other texts in a different tense. Switch a fairy tale (e.g. Little Red Riding Hood) from the past to present tense. Get pupils discussing the effect. Sometimes the present tense might add vividness to writing, as in monologues and drama.

EXPRESSING THE FUTURE

Generally, pupils don't need to know that there is no future tense. However, they do need guidance on how to express ideas in the future. See the next unit on teaching modals and conditionals.

Teaching about modal verbs

Although this is (relatively speaking) a tiny area of grammar, it is explicitly listed in the English Framework:

- Recognise and exploit the use of conditionals and modal verbs when speculating, hypothesising or discussing possibilities (Year 8).

ESSENTIAL GRAMMAR

You need to know what a modal verb is. You do not, however, need a detailed knowledge of the different modal categories (although they are included here for reference).

Modal verbs are special verbs which behave very differently from normal verbs. We use them to express meanings about permission (you may/you can/you must) and possibility (you could/you will).

COMMON MODAL VERBS

Modal verbs have some unusual grammatical features:

can
could
may
might
must
ought to
shall
should
will
would

- They do not take “-s” in the third person – e.g. “He can talk well” (not “He cans talk well”).
- They cannot usually be used in the past tense – e.g. “She must have studied hard” (not “She musted study hard”).
- They take *not* to create a negative – e.g. “You must not eat that”.

Modal verbs are associated with authority and control. Traditionally, there was a distinction between *can* and *may*:

You can swim = you have the ability to swim

You may swim = I am giving you permission to swim

Teaching about modal verbs

CREATING A CONTEXT

It really is pretty pointless to teach pupils about modal verbs out of context. The aim is for pupils to use them accurately, not to be able to spot them. They will therefore lend themselves to certain text-types:

COMPARING MEANINGS

Recounts	I could see the shore. I should have known there was a problem.
Instructions	You must keep a close eye on the tyre pressure. You may notice some vibrations.
Explanations	People must have known that this was wrong. There may be other explanations.

One of the best ways for pupils to explore modal verbs is by comparing the meanings of different sentences. They need to do this in small groups and be given time to articulate meanings – some of the expressions of tense are harder to describe than to understand.

So you could give pupils groups of related sentences and ask them to explain what the meaning or context for each one is. Sometimes it may be easier to think up a preceding or subsequent sentence to explain the meaning:

Group A

- a) I could play on the computer.
- b) I could be playing on the computer right now.
- c) I could have played on the computer yesterday.
- d) I could have been playing on the computer.

Group B

- a) The room should be tidied every day.
- b) The room should be being tidied now.
- c) The room should have been tidied yesterday.
- d) The room should have been being tidied.

WRITING

It is important that pupils get to practise using modals in an appropriate writing context. Using the sequence for teaching writing, you will want to explore modals in context and then, through shared composition, give pupils opportunities of writing sentences and paragraphs of, say, an explanation text or autobiographical essay so that they embed the skill before working on the full-length assignment.

Teaching about conditionals

Conditionals can seem a rather abstract area of English at first, but in fact they repay further study. We use them commonly in daily conversations and more explicit knowledge will help pupils to express hypothetical ideas with more precision.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

There are two kinds of conditional: real and unreal. Real conditional describes real-life situations. Unreal conditional describes unreal, imaginary situations.

PRESENT REAL CONDITIONAL

We use the present real conditional to talk about real-life situations. We use either *if* or *when*. Using *if* suggests that something happens less frequently. Using *when* suggests that something happens regularly.

- If the weather is nice, she walks to work.
- **When** the weather is nice, she walks to work.
- If I finish my work early, I take the dog for a walk.
- **When** I finish my work early, I take the dog for a walk.

PRESENT UNREAL CONDITIONAL

We use the present unreal conditional to talk about imaginary or hypothetical situations. The conditional clause begins with *if* to signal that it's a hypothetical thought (i.e. not something that will definitely happen). In formal writing, the verb form *was* is sometimes changed to *were*:

- If she was thinking straight, she would say no. (In formal contexts some writers might say: "If she were thinking straight, she would say no.")
- If I had the cash, I would travel to Egypt.
- I would buy that computer if it was cheaper. (In formal contexts some writers might say: "I would buy that computer if it were cheaper.")

Notice that you can often switch the order of the two clauses around:

- She would say no if she was thinking straight.

Teaching about conditionals

BEFORE THE LESSON

This is another area of grammar that needs to be taught at the appropriate point in your scheme of work. Pupils will benefit from learning about it when they are writing about relevant topics. In English, these might include assignments like these:

- Some people spend a lot of time and money on expensive adventures, such as round-the-world balloon races. Do you think these are a sensible type of challenge?
- “This house would scrap school uniform.” What are the arguments for and against this statement?
- What would be in your election manifesto if you were Prime Minister?
- How does Macbeth change from hero to villain?

TEACHING APPROACH

Each of these texts contains a hypothetical element that would require use of conditionals. Pupils would benefit from encountering some sentence kick-starters, like these:

If people didn't undertake challenges,...

If there were no school uniform, then...

If I had the power to make major decisions, I would start by...

If Macbeth had not met the witches, he might not...

- Encourage pupils to think how these sentences might continue.
- Get them to play around with the sentences, changing the sequence so (for example) the conditional clause follows the main clause (e.g. Life would be simpler if there were no school uniform). As always – get them to explore the effects of these changes.
- Get them to see whether there are ways of exploring hypothesis without using “if”.

REFLECTION

The main aim is to build pupils' confidence in using this grammatical tool, and to be able to reflect on how and when conditionals are appropriate. That is why the investigative approach – exploring language, collaborating, focusing on effect, reflecting on our own learning – is so central to success.

How to improve pupils' vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of those things many of us take for granted, something we've all got but don't perhaps pay much attention to. In his astonishingly comprehensive *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language*, David Crystal writes that there is limited agreement about how many words there might be in an average English speaker's vocabulary. Figures such as 10–12,000 for someone who has just left school and 20–25,000 for a college graduate are, he says "often cited in the media but totally lacking in research credibility".

Crystal usefully reminds us that in thinking about the extent of our vocabulary we should be looking for two totals: one for our active vocabulary (words we use in our own speech and writing) and the other for our passive vocabulary (words we know when we encounter them but which we do not use).

Recent research work by the DCSF suggests that the core of a child's vocabulary is affected by the language use of their parents and that the size of a six-year-old child's vocabulary will have a major influence on their achievement aged 16.

For English teachers, the key findings are that:

- key vocabulary can be identified and taught;
- repetition and explanation of key words and concepts four times seems to help pupils to learn the words;
- vocabulary development arises from explicit teaching, a rich repertoire of language in the classroom, repetition by the teacher of key words, and activities which build pupils' confidence in using unfamiliar words.

The main point is that we can influence and shape our pupils' vocabulary through active strategies.

How to improve pupils' vocabulary

BEFORE THE LESSON

Be more aware of how much, as teachers, we can do to develop our pupils' vocabulary. Many of them will come to us with an impoverished lexis, leaving those with the more advanced range of terms – especially for analytical writing – with a distinct advantage. We can make more difference than we perhaps realise, and this page gives some practical ideas about how.

IDENTIFY KEY WORDS

If we know that certain words characterise higher level writing, let's tell pupils and teach those words more explicitly. For example, in literature essays our C/D borderline pupils will probably use the verb *to say* excessively, as in the sentence "In the book it says that ...". Let's teach them to use the term *novel*; to refer more to the *author* or *writer*; and to use synonyms like *suggests*, *asserts*, *describes*, *proposes*, *claims*, *shows that*. A response that then says "In the novel the author suggests that ..." already feels like a more analytical, more assured piece of writing.

DISPLAY KEY WORDS

Connectives are especially important in helping to move pupils on in their writing. Too many of them will rely on *and* and *but* to link their ideas together. Let's display and refer to the various connectives that will help them – with guidance and practice – to write more formally and more analytically: *as*, *although*, *despite*, *when*, *because*, *however*, *while*, *after*. Display them and refer to them when teaching writing.

USE HIGH LEVEL VOCABULARY

George Sampson wrote in 1922 that "Every teacher in English is a teacher of English". Teachers have a big influence on pupils' language development and we should therefore aim to create classrooms that are rich in language. In part, this means using high level vocabulary but subtly explaining and clarifying it. Skilled teachers use words like *cynical* but verbally bracket an explanation of the word after each reference. For example, here's Peter, an outstanding English teacher: "Let's just think about whether the writer is being cynical (or negative) in this extract. Which words suggest that he is being cynical (or negative) and which words don't?"

A useful rule of thumb is that we should aim to use and explain any key word four times per lesson. That helps it to stick with our pupils.

How to teach full stops

Punctuation helps writers to clarify their meaning with precision. It helps readers to understand what writers are saying.

Full stops are, without doubt, the most important part of punctuation for your pupils to learn. They show the boundaries between sentences. Without them, pupils will not be able to write grammatically. Yet many grammar books hardly mention full stops. They take it for granted that everyone can use them accurately. In fact, throughout their learning, you will need to keep paying attention to your pupils' use of full stops.

There are likely to be two main issues:

- forgetting to use full stops, so that you get sentences like this:
I walked down the hill my friend was waiting for me.
- using commas where full stops are needed (called the comma splice):
I walked down the hill, my friend was waiting for me.

Pupils will benefit from:

- being reminded that punctuation is about demarcating meaning, not helping readers to take breaths or add pauses;
- hearing texts read aloud and being required to follow them on the page, so that they see the importance of full stops (and other punctuation marks) in shaping the reader's understanding;
- activities that help them to realise that short sentences are legitimate and acceptable. They sometimes assume that short sentences have to be separated by commas. Demonstrate that this is unnecessary. Give them plenty of examples of short sentences.

There are other uses of full stops, such as signifying abbreviations (e.g.), though this is less common, and in ellipses (...). But these are side issues until pupils are fully confident in using full stops to demarcate sentences. For now, focus on this issue.

How to teach full stops

BEFORE THE LESSON

Remember that principles of grammar often need teaching and re-teaching. Don't assume that ten years of literacy hours and red-ink corrections will have necessarily established unerringly accurate use of full stops. Use starter activities to reinforce the legitimacy of short sentences, separated by full stops. Be prepared to ban commas for a week or two in order to emphasise the role of full stops and to eradicate comma splices.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Definitely avoid setting lots of dreary punctuation exercises. Life is too short. Instead, explore sentences in context:

- Use a sequence of starter activities to explore short sentences – for example, in fiction writing that aims to build suspense:
It was cold. I was alone. I turned. I watched. I waited. Someone was behind me.
- Ask pupils to make up their own eight-sentence suspense stories. Each sentence has to be short and separated from the next only by a full stop.
- Focus on instructions. Get one pupil to leave the room whilst others think of a route that s/he must follow around the classroom, rather like a programmed robot. Pupils should come up with a sequence of brief, one-sentence instructions, like these:
Turn 90 degrees right. Walk to the large desk. Stop. Turn 90 degrees left. Take five paces forward. Pick up the board marker. Walk forward to the board. Write your name.
- Pupils love this game – it tests the precision of their instructions and reinforces the legitimacy of short sentences (and therefore the importance of full stops to demarcate sentence boundaries). To make it more interesting, get the pupil reading the instructions to face the wall so that s/he can't see what the "robot" is doing. This leads to greater hilarity when instructions go wrong. For particular excitement (though I take no responsibility for the consequences with certain groups), blindfold the "robot".

LEARNING REVIEW

- Get pupils to summarise the key function of full stops.
- Get them to collect examples of short sentences from a range of genres. Get them to annotate and display these around the classroom.
- In setting up essays, discursive writing and factual writing, remind them of the clarity simple sentences can bring to the start and end of paragraphs and, in the process, reinforce the impact of full stops

How to teach commas

One of the most useful jobs you might do for your pupils is to impose a temporary ban on commas. Use of the comma splice – deploying a comma to separate sentences where a full stop (or colon or semi-colon) is needed – is an indication that someone hasn't quite got a grasp on sentence control.

Here is an example:

Comma splice version	Punctuated with a full stop, semi-colon or colon
I was late, I arrived around 8 o'clock.	I was late. I arrived around 8 o'clock. OR I was late; I arrived around 8 o'clock.

You can see why someone might be tempted to do this. The subject of the two sentences is the same ("I") and using a full stop can feel too strong, too intrusive.

So what are commas for?

- 1 They separate items in a list:
 - between words: I will buy cheese, ham, potatoes and milk;
 - between phrases: there was a carton of milk, a packet of lentils, a bottle of orange juice and a mango;
 - between clauses: I came, I saw, I conquered.

People sometimes wonder whether to use a comma before *and*. As a general principle, there's no need, but occasionally a comma can be useful in showing the end of a list and the start of a new clause – like this: "I bought some cheese, ham, potatoes and milk, and then I went home." (Without the comma before the second and, you might assume you were still reading items in a list.)

- 2 Parenthetical commas bracket off self-contained words, phrases and clauses within a sentence. (Parentheses is a formal word for brackets – these commas work like brackets.):
 - words: Peter, agonisingly, watched as the train approached.
 - phrases: Peter, in an agonised moment, watched the train approach.
 - clauses: Peter, who should have been home by now, watched the train approaching.

In pairs like this, these commas can really add clarity to your writing.

- 3 To separate phrase and clause boundaries:

Waking up suddenly, he reached for the alarm clock.

In a fit of rage, he reached for the cat.

- 4 In speech punctuation

This is a technical use of commas – a convention – which pupils simply need to learn. See the spread on Speech Punctuation (p.52).

How to teach commas

BEFORE THE LESSON

It is most important for pupils to understand that commas only have the power to separate items within a sentence. In the punctuation league tables they are at the bottom, with full stops in the Premiership, followed by semi-colons and colons, then commas. Used skilfully, however, they are the mark of a confident, assured writer.

Remember: teach pupils that full stops are important and short sentences are quite legitimate (see the Teaching Full Stops spread). Then show them that commas can't link sentences together. They work WITHIN sentences by separating words, phrases and clauses, but they cannot separate sentences: they simply aren't strong enough.

Don't reach for a book of punctuation exercises. Pupils need to learn about commas in the context of their own writing. Use the teaching sequence below:

TEACHING IDEAS

- Use starters across a sequence of lessons to explore the conventions and get pupils practising. A good starting point, which clarifies the usefulness of commas, is to get them working on texts without commas:

The picture with its fresh and unexpected colours changed the way we viewed the world.

- Look at the way parenthetical commas assist the reader:

The picture, with its fresh and unexpected colours, changed the way we viewed the world.

- Get them generating other examples to explore three types of commas:

parenthetical commas (red item)

commas to separate lists (yellow item)

commas to mark off phrases/clauses (green item)

Pupils could think up the examples (without adding the commas) and write them on a sheet of acetate; then, one at a time, reveal their examples. In groups, pupils hold up a colour to indicate which use of the comma is required (and get one point). For their next point they have to punctuate it correctly.

REVIEWING THE LEARNING

Get them, in the opening paragraph of a discursive or factual assignment, to apply the same technique. In their draft, get them to highlight the comma type they are using, or make a note in the margin.

All of this is important for the transfer of learned knowledge to applied knowledge, and it will only happen if pupils are encouraged to build a specific feature into their own work, having previously practised it in a small unit.

Get pupils to devise a poster or sign that reminds other writers of the basic rules of commas, plus some examples.

How to teach speech punctuation

Speech punctuation has various conventions that pupils need to learn in order to write dialogue that is accurate. It is easy to over-complicate the topic, leaving pupils bewildered. So here are five essential ingredients of speech punctuation.

- 1 Use speech marks around the words that a person says:
“Hello,” said Nicholas.
Matthew replied, “Hi”.
- 2 The start of these words will need a capital letter, unless they are continuing from an earlier comment:
“Are you worried?” asked Nicholas.
“Yes,” replied Matthew, “but it’s nothing much.”
- 3 The end of the spoken words will need a punctuation mark, inside the speech marks, if the sentence carries on:
“I saw someone outside,” said Nicholas.
- 4 The words after the spoken words do not need a capital letter, even after an exclamation mark or full stop:
“What’s that?” asked Nicholas.
“It looks like a snake!” shrieked Matthew.
- 5 In introducing speech, it’s conventional to use a comma:
Nicholas said, “I’ve had enough of this.”
Matthew replied, “Me too.”

It is useful to know that the phrase that introduces or follows the spoken words (e.g. “Nicholas said...”, and “...replied Matthew”) is called the speech verb.

How to teach speech punctuation

BEFORE THE LESSON

Don't teach this in isolation: it won't work. Work on speech punctuation when pupils will need to demonstrate that they can use it. If they are writing a story or an extract from their autobiography, for example, then work on speech punctuation is likely to be much more effective.

TEACHING APPROACHES

I recommend that you teach speech punctuation as part of a sequence of work on dialogue. Pupils need to be confident in how dialogue in fiction works and how much to use. They should think about whether dialogue sometimes works better without speech verbs – like this:

"Hello," said Mathew.

"Hi," said Nick.

"So anything to report?"

"Not really."

This gets the reader working harder – making us work out who is speaking, but without clogging up the page with lots of speech verbs like "said" and "replied".

Get them also thinking about the appropriateness of dialogue. Too much dialogue can be very tedious. Exchanges like the four lines above are unlikely to enhance a story.

Once pupils have thought about the stylistic features of using dialogue, then you should focus on the conventions of writing it. To give them practice, you might copy a page from a comic (*The Beano* works well), getting pupils to retell the story by converting the word in the speech bubbles into dialogue. Give them access to the five conventions of speech punctuation by (a) demonstrating how to use them and (b) having the conventions on display somewhere.

LEARNING REVIEW

Pupils will benefit from having a reference point for speech punctuation, either in their exercise books or folders, or in a display. The conventions are definitely something that need regular practice before being fully internalised.

How to teach colons

Henry Fowler described the colon as “delivering the goods that have been invoiced in the preceding words”.

Colons work like a pair of headlamps. They point ahead to a conclusion, list or quotation. Some examples:

From the opening line of the story, John Connolly grabs our attention: “The bishop was a skeletal man, with long, unwrinkled fingers and raised dark veins that ran across his pale skin like tree roots over snowy ground”.

In this speech I will make three main points: first, I will argue that fishing is barbaric; second, I will show that it is as bad as fox-hunting; finally, I will show that there are better ways of catching fish without using hooks.

Detective Inspector Henwood suddenly saw what other officers had not noticed: the absence of a body and a weapon was a clue in itself.

In class, colons are especially useful in texts which include lists:

Remember to pack the following: raincoat, sandwiches and a small amount of cash.

They are also essential for writing well about literature:

Lady Macbeth is furious and determined: “Stick your courage to the sticking-place,” she says.

Notice the convention that the words that follow the colon do not need to start with a capital letter, except in quotations.

How to teach colons

BEFORE THE LESSON

Teach colons in the context of pupils' own writing. Don't teach them as an isolated "fact you need to know about punctuation". Most useful will be teaching colons before quotations in literature assignments. I suggest you do this in the broader context of how to use quotations.

TEACHING POINTS

First: teaching colons in the context of writing about literature. Here I would suggest the following teaching points:

- Every point you make about a text needs to be supported by a quotation.
- The best assignments use lots of short quotations embedded into the writer's own sentences, like this:
The Chorus introduces Romeo and Juliet as "a pair of star-crossed lovers"
Then follow up the quotation with a comment about it.

Sometimes you will want to use longer quotations. Use a colon to introduce the quotation, like this:

The play is full of mysterious and menacing images:

Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black.

Pupils could also explore the way writers use colons to build tension in their writing. (Graham Greene and Raymond Chandler are good examples). Again, demonstrate this yourself, writing a sentence in two parts to show how the first builds up to the colon:

Walking up the staircase I knew that something terrible awaited me: I was not wrong.

Stepping into the fog, Susan sensed something move: a dark shape retreated into the garden.

These could be written as two sentences, but – like searchlights – the colons help the reader to sense that there is something ahead.

Having demonstrated the convention, get pupils writing their own suspense-filled sentences. Give them a setting (an abandoned railway station, the storeroom of a supermarket, a school building at night).

LEARNING REVIEW

Get pupils to restate the convention. What are colons used for? How do they help readers in literature essays? How are they useful in lists? How do they help to build suspense in fiction writing?

How to teach semi-colons

George Orwell was famously dismissive of semi-colons. In fact, he wrote a novel (*Coming Up for Air*) without using any.

I've always found semi-colons really helpful for adding shades of subtlety to writing. Somewhere between the strength of a full stop and a comma, they can separate phrases and clauses that are linked in their meaning. Some examples:

- 1 Semi-colons link clauses which have the same subject:

I enjoy eating out; I'm also happy to stay in.

The cat moved slowly across the carpet; she seemed unwell.

Notice here that you could just as easily use the conjunctions *and* or *but*. That's a good way of thinking about semi-colons: use them where you might otherwise link phrases or clauses with *and* or *but*.

- 2 Semi-colons link clauses to create contrasts:

Macbeth begins as a hero; by the end of the play he is a villain.

The lorry was approaching fast; meanwhile the car was speeding away.

Again, notice the way the semi-colon creates balance. You could use full stops here, but the semi-colon suggests a link between the two ideas.

- 3 Semi-colons separate longer items in a list (e.g. phrases):

When you get to the furniture store you need to look for: a large pine table that has fold-down flaps; a table lamp which emits a light that is soft, diffuse and unobtrusive; and a new teapot.

Notice how the semi-colons rein these ideas in. They give shape and control to the sentence. Commas would leave us feeling confused, uncertain where one phrase ends and another begins.

How to teach semi-colons

BEFORE THE LESSON

Don't start teaching semi-colons if your pupils haven't got a good grasp of the need for capital letters and full stops to demarcate sentences. However, many pupils are liberated by semi-colons, learning that there is a punctuation device which usefully falls between the strength of a full stop and a comma.

One teacher I knew used to tell his pupils: "If you aren't sure whether to use a full stop or a comma, use a semi-colon". That worked well around 90 per cent of the time. Better, perhaps, is to remind pupils that a semi-colon stands in place of conjunctions like **and** and **but** to link phrases and clauses together.

Then demonstrate the beauty of them. Pupils need to see you writing, demonstrating the thought processes that are at the heart of the decisions we make when composing texts. For example, you might demonstrate how you would open an assignment about relationships "Of Mice and Men":

You say	You write
I want my opening sentence to grab the reader's attention and to get straight into the subject.	The novel begins with two men on the run.
I want to give some evidence and quickly show that I'm doing more than just retelling the story.	As they come out from the undergrowth into the scrubland by the pool, we see the strange partnership of...
Think of better words than "come out".	"As they emerge..."
And here's where I need to start showing what the two characters are like. So I write a brief summary of each character. Notice the variety of sentences I use – a statement and then a question. And look at how the semi-colon lets me put the description of Lennie and George side-by-side in the same sentence.	Lennie, gigantic, powerful and childlike; George, thoughtful, responsible and irritable – two apparently different characters. What brings them together?
Here's another example...	George pauses to check the water; Lennie just dunks his head straight into the pond.
See the way the semi-colon lets me link two related ideas? Now you have a go at two opening sentences and do the same – use a semi-colon to show how you're balancing ideas.	

None of this is a quick hit. You'll want to come back to semi-colons, but the point is that pupils are unlikely to learn the technique without seeing it modelled by you.

LEARNING REVIEW

Get pupils going back to the conventions – what does a semi-colon allow them to do that a full stop or comma will not? Get them to collect some examples from essays and books (they won't find many in newspapers). Have a crib sheet on the wall – a quick reminder of what semi-colons do, a statement of their status between a full stop and a comma; how they can join phrases and clauses; how they can create balance as well as contrasts; how they replace the words **and** or **but**.

How to teach apostrophes

Apostrophes fall into two different categories: possession and abbreviation.

APOSTROPHES FOR POSSESSION	APOSTROPHES FOR COMPRESSION
These indicate that something belongs to someone or something.	These indicate that the word has been shortened or compressed.
<p>Examples:</p> <p>This is Wordsworth's finest poem</p> <p>These are the children's toys.</p>	<p>Examples:</p> <p>It's getting very hot. (= it is)</p> <p>You can't be serious. (= cannot)</p>

What you need to know:

APOSTROPHES FOR POSSESSION

To show the possessive form of a noun, simply add apostrophe + s:

- a dog's lead
- that woman's shoes
- a day's work
- a week's wages

To show the possessive form of a plural noun that already ends in s, just add an apostrophe after the existing s:

- the boys' game
- the dogs' lead
- two weeks' work

If the plural form doesn't end in s, add apostrophe + s as you would for the singular form:

- the children's games
- the women's shoes

APOSTROPHES FOR COMPRESSION

The apostrophe shows where the word has been compressed. It is as simple as that.

Other things you ought to know:

- People sometimes get confused about *theirs* and *its*. *Theirs* is a pronoun. Think of it alongside *his* and *hers*. *Its* is a determiner. Think of it alongside *his* / *her* / *their*.
- Some nouns that end with s give you a choice of whether to add just an apostrophe or apostrophe + s. As a rule of thumb, if you can hear the extra s, add it: Charles's appetite; Jesus's teaching.

How to teach apostrophes

BEFORE THE LESSON

It's easy to make heavy weather of apostrophes. Keep it simple and clear, using lots of lively starter activities to reinforce understanding and to build confidence. Starters are the key to teaching apostrophes because they allow you to keep it light and fast-moving. However, you will need to get pupils understanding the conventions: apostrophes for possession against compression.

TEACHING APPROACHES

Demonstrate the conventions, perhaps by keeping possession and compression initially separate. Give a few examples, but time spent grinding through apostrophe exercises is usually wasted. The main areas of confusion will be:

Plurals
it's / its

The starter activity below will help to reinforce understanding of the latter.

Apostrophe challenge

This activity helps pupils to distinguish between some of the hardest homophones. As part of a starter activity, give pupils a sentence that contains an apostrophe challenge. Say the sentence out loud and then give pupils five seconds to think of which form of the word it is.

If you think it's this version of the word, put your hands up when I click my fingers	If you think it's this version, freeze when I click my fingers
they're	their
who's	whose
it's	its

Then say a sentence like this:

- Those boys on the field – they look like they're causing trouble.
- Their only hope of winning was to cut corners.
- This is the referee who's refereeing the match.
- At the side of the pitch the cat stretched its legs.

Repetition of this activity over a sequence of starters really does build pupils' knowledge. The real beauty of it is getting pupils to explain to each other how they distinguish between the two homophones. Often they can explain more clearly and relevantly than we can.

How to teach Standard English

Whole books are devoted to defining and debating Standard English. You need to know some essential information to help your pupils use Standard English appropriately and accurately.

Linguist Sidney Greenbaum has defined Standard English as “the variety of English that is manifestly recognised in our society as the prestigious variety”. Any controversy comes from the “prestigious” part of this definition because some people dispute it. They point out that Standard English is a minority dialect, used by perhaps 12–15 per cent of the population, and therefore see it as based on social elitism and educational privilege.

In the classroom, this attitude is usually unhelpful. Pupils need to explore (a) what Standard English is (b) how it relates to other dialects and (c) why it has such status. From this they will learn when using Standard English is essential, when it’s appropriate and when it doesn’t matter.

A rule-of-thumb definition:

- 1 It is a dialect (a variety of English) alongside other varieties, such as Yorkshire or Geordie.
- 2 It is an important dialect because it is not linked to one geographical area or social class. It also has considerable intellectual and social status and is used in the law, in education, in print and in TV and radio (sometimes in conjunction with regional accents).
- 3 Standard English is a purely social dialect. Although its origins were originally in the south-east of England, it is now used all over the English-speaking world, and not just in one region.
- 4 Standard English is the dialect used for most written English forms, giving it a more permanent nature than many other dialects, as well as huge prestige from being the ‘official’ source of English.
- 5 The status of Standard English derives from being selected (though not by any overt decision) as the variety to become the standard variety. It developed because it was the variety associated with the social group with the highest degree of power, wealth and prestige. This has been reinforced since because it has been employed as the dialect used in education.

In the English Framework, Standard English is presented as something for pupils to explore actively – for example, using it consistently in formal situations and in writing (Year 7); being able to define how some of its grammatical features compare with other dialects (Year 8); exploring attitudes to Standard English (Year 9).

How to teach Standard English

BEFORE THE LESSON

Remember that your main aim is for pupils to write consistently using Standard English, and use it in formal situations. By Year 9, pupils will need to have a better understanding not only of the key features, but also of attitudes towards Standard English.

TEACHING APPROACHES

To explore Standard English actively you might:

- Look at extracts of regional dialect in a novel – e.g. David Almond’s *Heaven Eyes*, where some characters use Standard English and others do not – this will help to emphasise the differences between standard and non-standard forms. Pupils research examples of phrases and sentences they might hear spoken but would not expect to see written (except as dialogue):

I never do nothing on Fridays. I’ve just ate my tea. We was out when it happened. I really likes it when Sarah comes round. The place were dead quiet.

- Create a text where we *expect* Standard English but include some non-standard features – for example, a radio news report rewritten to contain errors of agreement and double negative:

The Prime Minister’s been in Birmingham today chatting to school children. We was hoping to bring you a live report...

- Pupils explore why this text feels inappropriate.
- Pupils explore various situations and decide whether they think it is necessary to use Standard English:

Speaking and listening	Writing
Chatting with friends before school An interview for work experience	A letter of complaint to a company An email to a friend

To explore the grammatical conventions you might:

- get pupils comparing a text in Standard English with a different dialect, looking for examples of some key differences:

Grammatical feature	Standard English	Other dialect
Subject–verb agreement:	I am, you are, he is I do, you do, they did I go, you go, they went	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I be, you be, he be • I do, you does, they done • I goes, you goes, they gone
Use of negatives	I don’t have any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don’t have none • I ain’t got none
Use of pronouns	himself, themselves you this / that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hisself, theirselves • youse / thee / thou • that / yon
Formation of past tense	I have seen / I saw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have seen / I seen

How to teach cohesion

Cohesion is an important principle in grammar, though many people probably haven't been taught about it explicitly. It is the term to describe various ways of linking sentences and paragraphs in a text. Here is what you need to know:

Cohesive device	Quick definition	Example
Pronoun	Pronouns allow us to refer back to people, places and objects without repeating their names. As the word "pronoun" suggests, they stand in for the noun. Pronouns include <i>he, she, it, they, them</i>	The pupils were late for class. <i>They</i> got in trouble. Mrs Hird visited. <i>She</i> seemed happy.
Determiners	These are words like <i>a, then, an, their, his</i> . They tell us more about a noun (notice how much we learn from these three determiners: some children, my children, their children). They can be an important means for helping to avoid repetition.	"Wynn and Sarah have brought <i>their</i> children" rather than: "Wynn and Sarah have brought Wynn and Sarah's children".
Conjunctions	These link phrases, clauses and sentences together. The most common conjunctions are <i>and, but</i> and <i>or</i> . Sometimes <i>And</i> and <i>But</i> are used at the start of sentences for emphasis.	We watched the movie <i>and</i> we had an ice cream. <i>But</i> the best part was when we got back home.
Conjuncts	These are adverbials which link together clauses, sentences and paragraphs. They are one of our most important tools in teaching paragraphing. There are various categories of conjunct as you can see in the "example" column.	sequencing – e.g. first, secondly, to begin with, furthermore, next, finally, to conclude, meanwhile summarising – all in all, thus, to sum up, overall, altogether illustrating – such as, unless that is, for instance emphasising – above all, in particular, especially cause and effect – therefore, consequently, as a result, because, so qualifying – otherwise, in that case, however, except, if contrasting – unlike, whereas, in other words, on the other hand comparing – equally, in the same way, similarly, likewise
Adverbials	Adverbials of time and place allow connections between different parts of a text.	Examples include: time : three weeks later, next day, afterwards place : at the other side of the forest, inside the house, above their heads

Note that effective writers also create cohesion by their choice of vocabulary. They will choose words which don't repeat an earlier word but refer to the same "semantic field" or area of meaning: The knight rode through the *forest*. The *trees* were dark and menacing. The *wood* was far from welcoming.

How to teach cohesion

BEFORE THE LESSON

Be clear about what you want pupils to know. It is important not to over-complicate and, therefore, alienate pupils with excessive terminology. The essential information for pupils is that there are two types of connectives:

- conjunctions (which link clauses – e.g. *and*, *but*, *because*); and
- conjuncts (or connecting adverbs) which link ideas across sentences and paragraphs (e.g. *therefore*, *despite*, *this*). You might simply want to refer to these as “linking words”.

DISPLAY

Have a definition of connectives in the classroom – keep it simple, such as: “The words and phrases we use to link sentences and paragraphs in a text”. Have examples of different types of cohesive devices, especially the different categories of conjuncts.

FAMILIARISING PUPILS

Get pupils familiar with the concept of cohesion. Some pupils will currently lack ambition in the way they write, linking clauses together using *and* and *but*, and linking sentences and phrases with *then*. Use starter activities to get pupils, in pairs or small groups, linking sentences in more challenging ways. Give them a number of sentences and get them to explore how they would link the ideas:

“We warmed the chocolate in a bowl. We added the butter.”

could become:

“First we warmed the chocolate in a bowl. Then we added the butter.”

or:

“We warmed the chocolate in a bowl and then we added the butter.”

Get pupils to articulate the choices they make: “We chose to use two connectives. They both show sequence”.

READING

Encourage pupils to pick out connectives in texts they are studying in your lesson or other subjects. Ask them to collect examples from across the curriculum. Do a survey of whether certain connectives are used more in certain subjects (for example, Science may use more cause-and-effect conjuncts).

WRITING

This is where you will make the biggest impact. Use the writing sequence to provide models of good writing. Demonstrate how you might use connectives or other devices to link ideas. Use shared composition to involve them in brainstorming alternative words and phrases.

How to teach paragraphing

For those of us who are effective language users – and as teachers we all effective users of spoken and written language – it can be easy to assume that paragraphing is a simple matter. We simply start a new paragraph when we start a new topic. In fact, many pupils need more explicit guidance than this, as well as more detailed teaching about other aspects of paragraphing.

Our Year 7 pupils need to know:

- when and how to start a new paragraph, using the first sentence to guide the reader;
- how to identify the main point of a paragraph and how other information relates to it;
- how to explore paragraphs which contain sentences that are not ordered chronologically; and
- how to organise their ideas into a logical sequence of paragraphs, introducing, developing and concluding them appropriately.

Year 8:

- Explore and compare different methods of grouping sentences into paragraphs – such as chronology, comparison or through adding exemplification.
- Develop different ways of linking paragraphs using a range of strategies – such as choice of connectives, reference back and linking phrases.

Year 9:

- Evaluate their ability to shape ideas rapidly into cohesive paragraphs
- Compare and use different ways of opening, linking and completing paragraphs

Paragraphs often begin with topic sentences that guide the reader to the content of the ensuing paragraph. These are especially useful in paragraphs which explain, analyse and argue. “Paragraph sprawl” occurs when irrelevant details are added in. Here are two examples of ineffective and effective paragraphs:

Ineffective

I think that there are too many reality TV shows on television. *Big Brother* exploits the people who are in the house and the producers encourage them to get into conflict. Other programmes like *X Factor* are more interesting because they give people a chance to be famous for their talents. *X Factor* is my favourite. Part of the fun is watching the way people cope with pressure, whether of fame or of being cooped up with lots of other people.

This begins with a topic sentence but then too quickly jumps from one example to the next rather than developing the argument. It also contains the irrelevant sentence “*X Factor* is my favourite”.

Effective

I think that there are too many reality TV shows on television. They fall into different categories: those that focus on ordinary people in ordinary situations; those that put ordinary people into unusual situations; and those that give ordinary people a chance to become celebrities by showcasing their talents. As viewers we watch each of these to see what ordinary people are like and how they react under pressure. Whilst this can be entertaining, it can also feel like exploitation.

This uses the same topic sentence and then explores the issue before looking at individual examples. Notice how semi-colons are used to present three different examples, creating a balanced structure. Subsequent paragraphs might then explore each type of show in more detail, using linking phrases like “The first type of reality show, then, includes . . .”

Because of the importance of connectives, they are dealt with separately in the next spread.

How to teach paragraphing

BEFORE THE LESSON

Build paragraphing explicitly into your planning so that pupils are taught it systematically, not by chance. It might be that work on writing story openings would be one useful context – looking at how paragraphs are used in chronological writing. It is important that pupils also explore paragraphing in other text-types, especially explanation and other non-chronological forms.

Teach pupils some essential ingredients of paragraphs:

- the usefulness of *topic sentences* to establish what a sentence is about;
- how subsequent sentences in a paragraph should relate back or develop this;
- use of linking phrases, pronouns and connectives to build cohesion within paragraphs;
- how a simple sentence at the end of a paragraph can add clarity to the topic.

Sample text: argument writing

To make this active, use starter activities in which they assemble a paragraph from ready-made sentences, like this:

- Undertaking extreme challenges to raise money is a good thing.
- Some people go trekking in the Himalayas or bungee-jumping for charity.
- Whilst having once-in-a-lifetime experiences, participants are also benefiting other people.
- Some people criticise this kind of “designer” fund-raising, seeing it as a gimmick.
- Why shouldn’t people have fun whilst making money for others?
- People who do this should be applauded, not criticised.
- Extreme fundraising is definitely a positive thing.

Get pupils playing with the order of these, deciding how they would sequence the sentences, whether any sentences are irrelevant, any linking words to add, and then – crucially – explaining their decisions. Do the same for different text-types. Encourage them to use appropriate terms such as “topic sentence” and “connectives”.

Use plenaries to get pupils talking not just about what they have done (“put sentences into a sequence”) but, more importantly, what they have learnt (“how to open a paragraph with a topic sentence, and how to link other sentences to it”).

READING

Encourage pupils to look at paragraphs in lots of texts. Homework might be to look at a text-type of their choice (newspaper article, recipe, holiday brochure) and to be prepared to talk about one paragraph: how it is structured; how the sentences relate to one another; examples of linking words and phrases.

Get pupils looking at and comparing each other’s opening, continuing and concluding paragraphs. This can be done in very short bursts, but will build their familiarity with the conventions and make them into more reflective language users.

How to teach differences between speech and writing

One essential part of every pupil's knowledge of English should be how speech and writing differ. The English Framework requires pupils to investigate some of the differences (for example, hesitation in speech) (Year 7) and degrees of formality in written and spoken texts (Year 8).

Bear in mind that in a multimedia age, many of these distinctions are becoming blurred – take text-messaging, for example. This should make your work exploratory rather than aiming to define hard-and-fast rules.

A summary of the main differences between speech and writing could include:

SPEECH	WRITING
time-bound, transient, dynamic, part of an interactive process	Space-bound, static, permanent, usually to a distant audience
Structural features include special features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pauses • repetition • hesitation • rephrasing • fillers (e.g. <i>sort of</i>) • gaze, posture, gesture • intonation and pauses to divide units of meaning 	Structured through units of discourse (sentence / paragraph) Graphological conventions to assist the reader (capital letters, full stops, and so on) serving a similar purpose to intonation in speech
Deictic features – <i>this one, over there</i> – because context-dependent	Distance means few deictic features
Often spontaneous	Often pre-planned Often a time-lag between production and reception
Many genres cannot adequately be represented – e.g. graphs, formulae	Punctuation, capitals, colour, layout, graphological features
Informal, sometimes lower status, though in general we don't write when we can speak	More formal, status, adds authority in law and religion

How to teach differences between speech and writing

BEFORE THE LESSON

This aspect of English benefits from a genuinely exploratory approach. It is definitely not about saying that writing has more status than speech; rather it's concerned with investigating the appropriateness of speech and writing in different contexts.

TEACHING APPROACHES

To explore this topic you could:

- ask pupils to collect examples of words and phrases they expect to hear in speech (e.g. greetings; fillers: *you know, sort of*; hesitations: *erm*);
- ask them to collect examples of words and phrases they would expect to find chiefly in written texts (greetings: *Dear Sir*; formal vocabulary: *however*);
- collect some examples of contrasting spoken/written texts on a similar theme – for example, the opening of a BBC TV weather forecast with a daily newspaper's printed forecast and someone answering the question, "What will the weather be like today?";
- find examples of chat show interviews, lectures, speeches, emails, texts, where there are less clear boundaries between speech and writing.

Pupils use these to explore which features are distinctive of spoken texts (vocabulary and structures) and which are distinctive of written texts, in order to move to some generalisations about the conventions.

To compare written and spoken texts you could:

- use a very brief, spontaneous spoken text and start by demonstrating its key features:
Oh, hi, how are you? What's that you've got? You off to Maths now or ... oh .. okay, see you later then

- use questions and explanation to demonstrate:

word level features:

Oh – shows surprise

Hi – informal greeting used in speech more than writing

How are you? – phatic language – used as a sign of politeness/friendship rather than as a genuine inquiry

That – the demonstrative pronoun would make sense to the speakers, but in writing we'd need more clues what it was referring to

Sentence level features:

unfinished sentence – shows how speech is less structured

LEARNING REVIEW

Get pupils converting written to spoken texts and vice versa. Get them to reflect on the changes they have made, for example by annotating their finished text.

How to teach formality in speech and writing

We use the term register to refer to the way we vary our language according to the context. Registers are linked to occupations, professions or topics. A doctor, for example, will use a medical register. The formality of what she says will depend on:

- written or spoken form;
- the subject matter;
- setting;
- audience.

Linguist Peter Trudgill distinguishes between register and style. Register is the vocabulary associated with a topic. Style is the degree of formality used.

This is a helpful distinction because a doctor may be using a medical register differently according to his/her audience. In a lecture to medical students, or in a journal article, his/her style may be formal. In explaining a diagnosis to a patient, his/her style may be much more informal.

Formality might show itself in more complex vocabulary, more formal sentence structures or a less spontaneous style (e.g. reading prepared notes).

Sometimes speakers use jargon. This is use of language which often deliberately obscures the speaker's meaning.

Features of unhelpful jargon:

- vocabulary that is unnecessarily complex;
- vocabulary that is currently fashionable (buzzwords) – e.g. *interface*, *parameters*, *blue-sky thinking*;
- latin phrases (e.g. *affidavit* = statement of truth);
- euphemisms – downsizing and rationalising;
- unnecessarily elaborate constructions – “learning resource centres”.

At the other end of the continuum is slang. This is an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases generally considered socially lower than standard English. Slang establishes or reinforces group identity; it can show that we belong to a group because we use fashionable words. Slang sometimes deals with taboo topics (aspects of sex, drugs, death). Some examples (relating to drink): *blitzed*, *smashed*, *bombed*, *fried*, *hammered*, *polluted*, *toasted*, *ripped*, *slammed*, *smashed*, *wasted*.

How to teach formality in speech and writing

BEFORE THE LESSON

Exploring formality and informality is a rich area for investigation by pupils. Think of ways to make it active – such as using role-play, looking at drama texts, having fun by switching the register of one context into another (e.g. slang used at an interview).

TEACHING APPROACHES

To get pupils actively exploring the topic you could:

- look at language associated with a spoken context – for example:
Could you pass the butter?
- ask pupils to see how many other ways there are of expressing the same idea. They should think of examples that are sometimes informal (used to people you know well) and sometimes formal (used to people you do not know well):

Butter!

Excuse me, would you mind awfully if I troubled you to pass me the butter?

You could ask pupils to draw a line to show a continuum, like this:

Informal ← — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — → Formal

The two examples above would belong at the two extremes of the continuum.

For each of the pupils' examples, ask them to discuss and decide where it belongs on the continuum.

Explore this in a longer sequence, this time by composing a brief letter of complaint about a product they have bought – say a jar of jam in which they find a slug.

Pupils think about how they might express the complaint face-to-face in a shop. They write down some of the words and phrases they would expect to use.

Pupils plan how they would express the same idea in writing – focusing on features of vocabulary (greetings) and structures (elisions, sentence types) that would be more appropriate in a formal letter.

Provide some sample greetings and phrases to get pupils started:

- Dear Sir or Madam / Dear Mrs Wheeler / Dear Joyce
- I am writing to you about ... I was extremely surprised to find ...

Pupils produce lists of other possible phrases in the appropriate register.

Pupils explore colloquial/formal pairings: ask/request, bad/appalling, upset/concerned.

LEARNING REVIEW

Get pupils comparing work in progress. Read out some samples so that the appropriate tone is explored and reinforced.

Get them making explicit the assumptions they have made and, in particular, the language decisions they have made about vocabulary and sentences.

Get them to give feedback to each other about their work.

How to teach spelling

Spelling brings out the insecurities in even the most confident of people. We know that accurate spelling arises from being taught to read effectively, from parents and teachers who have encouraged close attention to word patterns, to teachers who have helped to make the bewilderingly bizarre world of English spelling seem somehow understandable to pupils.

By the time we inherit pupils at key stage 3 and 4, many will have hardened their view that they are bad spellers. And since spelling for many people is closely associated with self-esteem, they will assume they are bad at English or not very clever.

So one of the most important messages we can give our pupils is that accurate spelling isn't something we're born with; that all of us – even the most outwardly confident pupils and teachers – have spelling blindspots, words we struggle with.

They will benefit from hearing that most of us have techniques for helping us to spell certain words. It might be a mnemonic (a silly rhyme or jingle); it might be a visual clue (for example, looking at words-within-words); or it might be that we know certain patterns of spelling in English which usually work (e.g. that all words ending in “-ful” only have one “l”).

Hearing us demystifying spelling like this will be important. Similarly, we should identify the words which pupils regularly misspell and have a blitz on them, through games, quizzes, spelling tests, getting parents to test pupils at home – but keeping it all pretty light-hearted. And we should also make a point of ensuring that our classrooms and corridors are literacy-friendly and actively help pupils to visualise key words, so that we constantly reinforce the way that some words are spelt.

How to teach spelling

1 Keep it practical

Teach pupils approaches and techniques that they can use in practice. For example:

Eight strategies for better spelling:

- 1 Break the word into **sounds** (d-i-a-r-y).
- 2 Break it into **syllables** (re-mem-ber).
- 3 Break it into **affixes** (dis + satisfy).
- 4 Use a **mnemonic** (memory device – for example, necessary = “never eat chips eat sausage sandwiches and raspberry yoghurt”).
- 5 Refer to word in the same **family** (muscle – muscular) (word webs).
- 6 Say it as it sounds (Wed-nes-day) (**spellspeak**).
- 7 Find **words within words** (Parliament – I AM parl-i-am-ent).
- 8 Refer to **etymology** (bi + cycle = two + wheels).

Seven spelling rules:

- No English word has a **q** without a **u** – e.g. **quiet**.
- No English word ends in **j** or **v** except **spiv**.
- For short words ending in **l**, **s**, or **f**: double the last letter, e.g. **tell**, **fuss**.
- To make a word plural that ends in a vowel plus **y**: add an **s**, e.g. **toy -toys**.
- To make a word plural that ends in a consonant plus **y**: change the **y** to **ies**.
- Some words have a silent e that changes the sound of the vowel, e.g. **hope**.
- **l** before **e** except after **c** when the sound rhymes with **e**, e.g. **believe**, **receipt**.

Six frequently confused homophones (words with similar sounds but different spellings):

- advise/advice (I advise you; I give you some advice)
- affect/effect (the music affects my mood; it has a bad effect)
- allowed/aloud (eating is not allowed here; I was thinking aloud)
- practise/practice (I practise my football; it is time for my football practice)
- quiet/quite (the room is quite quiet)
- threw/through (I threw the ball through the doorway)

2 Use starters, not whole lessons, for teaching spelling

Starters are a great way of keeping an approach to spelling at the forefront of pupils’ minds, enabling focused work at the start of a lesson which last ten minutes (no more) and is then continued across the next lesson. In my experience this really allows us to build pupils’ spelling confidence and skills.

Some ideas: look at frequently confused homophones (their/there/they’re). You say a sentence containing one of them. Pupils have three seconds thinking time and then stand up, put their hands up, or freeze according to which one it is. Or use (a) “it’s” and (b) “its”: say a sentence (“The cat licked its paws”) and pupils hum Beethoven’s Fifth if it’s (a), or a Kylie song if it’s (b). Spelling games, however daft, make spelling memorable and less intimidating.

How to develop reading skills and strategies

It is worth remembering that we read for different purposes. This counts across texts as well as within texts. In other words, sometimes we will read a newspaper for pleasure; sometimes to get the gist of a story; sometimes to find out some specific information. The same applies to many other texts – recipe books, novels, autobiographies.

In schools we often don't give enough attention to this. We can easily assume that reading is all about comprehension.

There are four broad approaches to reading which you need to know about:

scanning	searching a text for a specific piece of information – e.g. a quotation
skimming	glancing through a text to get the gist – e.g. using subheadings and topic sentences to pick up a writer's general argument
continuous reading	uninterrupted reading of an extended text – e.g. a novel
close reading	studying a text in detail, which involves moving back and forth through the text – e.g. studying the presentation of a theme or character in a short story

When working with pupils, we should aim to make our expectations of the appropriate approach more explicit. This will help them to use the appropriate approach and to recognise their own growing ability to read in different ways for different purposes.

How to develop reading skills and strategies

BEFORE THE LESSON

Before using a text with pupils, be clear which approach to reading they will need. Are you expecting them to locate specific pieces of information, or to gain an overview of the text? Will they need to analyse it in detail? Is the intention for them to read for pleasure?

DURING THE LESSON

Teach pupils explicitly about the way we read for different purposes. Have the four reading approaches on display in your room, so that they can refer to them.

Use a sequence of starter activities to get pupils thinking about how they might approach the reading of a certain text – e.g.:

You have been given a textbook in Geography and asked to list the five main facts explaining how volcanoes erupt. Which approach to reading will you use? How will you approach the task?

Next: you are reading a novel set on a volcanic island. You have been asked to look at the way the writer builds suspense. Which approach to reading will you use?

Talk to pupils about how you read – model the process. Talk about the book you are currently reading for pleasure. Explain how sometimes you might use the same book for a different reading purpose (e.g. to find a quotation, to check some details or to study how the writer uses language).

Teach pupils explicitly how to scan a text. Use starter activities to give out a series of mystery texts (e.g. pages from recipe books, openings of stories, historical writing, science writing, a leaflet, and so on). For each one, give pupils a short amount of time (e.g. 90 seconds) with the task of either locating some specific information or gaining the overall gist of the text. After 90 seconds, pupils move round to the next text.

Working like this in pairs or small groups will build pupils' awareness of different reading approaches and build their confidence.

In the plenary, get them to talk about how they approach the task, how their skills are developing and what they are learning about how people read.

WHOLE SCHOOL

Encourage a whole-school approach to adopting these approaches to reading; it will further give clarity and reassurance to pupils.

Using active reading approaches to texts

Traditional school comprehension was often remorselessly tedious. Pupils would read a text and then face a seemingly endless set of questions, many of which tested nothing other than a narrow ability to spot key words or facts.

Here's an example of how artificial that process can be. This is a nonsense text and yet you will be able to answer the questions – i.e. without understanding what the text is about:

Truslers

Most truslers were fungicated in Whippyville. They were frequently stogged into pashwit bloatings, foibled, and disconvetoed within snoozlings, traceys or snargets. Their thumpwacking sistings were also transcretined into chevin.

- 1 Where were most truslers fungicated?
- 2 What were they were stogged into?
- 3 Name one thing they were disconvetoed within.

Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) are more active ways of getting pupils to process and respond to texts. Pupils like them because they resemble games and puzzles. They work well as pair or group activities. They encourage an exploratory approach, rather than a simple right/wrong answer.

DARTs fall in two main categories:

reconstruction activities:

- text completion (cloze)
- diagram completion
- table completion
- completion activities with disorganised text
- prediction

analysis activities:

- underlining or highlighting
- labelling
- segmenting
- diagrammatic representation
- tabular representation

DARTs help us to get away from an over-reliance on questions, whether in writing or live in class. But you need to prepare them, and your starting point should be: "What do I want pupils to learn from this text?". That emphasis on learning is important because, however entertaining the DARTs approach can be, it can also be unproductive if not clearly focused on developing specific reading skills.

Using active reading approaches to texts

ACTIVITIES FOR RECONSTRUCTING TEXTS

Text completion (cloze)	Give pupils a text in which certain key words, phrases and sentences have been deleted. Working in pairs or small groups, pupils work out what the omissions are. Train them to tell you why they made certain predictions – what the language clues were.
Diagram completion	Ask pupils to predict what the missing labels on a diagram might be, based on their reading of a text and other diagrams – for example, an explanation text.
Table completion	Give pupils a text to read and a table with deliberate gaps and omissions. Based on their reading, they predict what the gaps might be – e.g. studying different characters in a novel.
Disordered text	Give pupils a text in the wrong sequence, perhaps on cut-up strips of paper. Pupils predict the correct sequence – e.g. by focusing on connectives (e.g. <i>firstly, next</i>) and pronouns (<i>he, they</i>). Remember always to ask pupils in their feedback to describe the basis for their decisions – i.e. the process they went through
Prediction	Withhold the next part of the text, either by not handing it out or simply by asking pupils to look up and turn the text over. What do they think happens next? What clues are there? Give them thinking time, and time to consult with a partner before requiring an answer.

ACTIVITIES FOR ANALYSING TEXTS

Underlining or highlighting	Ask pupils to find examples of something and mark them directly on to the text – e.g. an image, emotive words, certain types of sentences.
Labelling	Ask pupils to annotate a text – e.g. labelling a passage to show what we learn about a character.
Segmenting	Ask pupils to break a text into paragraphs or sections and explain – e.g. showing how an author has structured a text with sections of plot, dialogue and description.
Diagrammatic representation	Ask pupils to convert a text into a diagram or graph – e.g. using a graph to show how a writer builds suspense in different paragraphs.
Tabular representation	Ask pupils to find certain pieces of information and then to present it in a table or grid which they devise.

Remember: all of these can be entertaining activities in their own right. Keep focusing on the learning, asking pupils to demonstrate what they have learnt about their own reading skills from the process.

How to help pupils understand subject-specific vocabulary

In our language we use words from a range of registers or contexts. It can be helpful to think in terms of four registers:

Register	Definition
The common register	The most common, everyday words in our language. By some linguists' estimates there are around 500,000 of these.
The colloquial register	The informal words we use, including slang expressions. These words and expressions will vary according to audience or background. They will often change rapidly over time.
The literary register	Words associated with literature
The technical/scientific register	Words associated with science and technology

The reason this is important is that it can highlight the way words change their meanings according to context. Whilst pupils may be familiar with a word in its common register use, they may need explicit teaching about its meaning in other contexts. For example:

Word	Common register meaning	Technical meanings
Plates	dishes used for eating	Geography: rigid slabs made of the Earth's crust that move relative to one another
Frequency	how often something happens	Physics: the rate at which an electrical current alternates
Highlight	best part	Art: the lightest or whitest parts in a photograph or illustration represented in halftone reproduction by the smallest dots or the absence of dots
Tone	the way something sounds	Linguistics: a pitch or change in pitch of the voice that serves to distinguish words in tonal languages Literature: the quality of a piece of writing that reveals the attitude of the author

This is an important reminder that we cannot take our pupils' recognition of subject-specific vocabulary for granted. We need to teach it.

How to help pupils understand subject-specific vocabulary

YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What is the essential subject-specific vocabulary that pupils need to know for your subject? Which words do we want all Year 7 pupils to know about language, literature and media? If you teach another subject, what are the key words there, again on a year-by-year basis.

Across the department, is there agreement about the meanings of these words and that they need explicitly to be taught? (A good starting point for discussion is the QCA spelling lists, issued a few years ago.) You're not going to be able to teach the vocabulary effectively if you haven't a clear view of what the essential words are.

To support pupils' vocabulary development:

- Display the key words in your classroom, with definitions.
- Post them on your department's intranet site.
- Draw attention to affixes that will help pupils to make connections with other words – for example:
auto + bio + graphy = self + life + writing
Can pupils think of other words containing these three elements?
Do they share a similar meaning?
- Encourage pupils to have personal word books where they collect subject-specific vocabulary and definitions from all their subjects.
- Build glossaries into handouts. This will help pupils to know the meaning of specific words and develop their skills in using reference strategies like glossaries, contents lists and indexes.

To build these strategies into your lesson:

- Plan a sequence of starters built around subject specific vocabulary – e.g. pupils in teams spotting the correct spelling/definition of literary terms like metaphor, simile, hyperbole.
- Use plenary sessions to refer back to key words, asking pupils to think of good definitions for different audiences – e.g. how would you explain metaphor to a six-year-old?
- Encourage pupils to work in small groups or pairs to discuss the meanings of words. Get them brainstorming how a word such as "image" or "tone" might be used differently in other subjects.
- Tell pupils that you will be rewarding successful use of subject-specific vocabulary in their next essay. Ask them to highlight the words to which you might add a big tick or smiley face.

How to teach research skills

Pupils are frequently expected to read a text and locate information. This happens in most subject areas across school. However, pupils are rarely taught how to approach such tasks, with the result that some struggle with the activity and lose confidence in their own reading abilities.

A systematic approach to research projects will pay dividends, both in the quality of the work pupils produce, their increased understanding of the process, and better motivation for similar projects.

This approach to research is from *Practical Ways to Teach Reading for Information* (Wray and Lewis, 1997). The authors outline the following four-stage process:

Stage 1: Establishing purposes	This stage is about providing a context. It helps pupils to understand what they are being expected to find out, how this links with their existing knowledge, and being clear about the outcome that is expected.
Stage 2: Locating information	This helps pupils to focus on the practicalities of the task – what sources of information to use, the reading approaches they might need and how to record their findings.
Stage 3: Interacting with the text	This should be an active stage – finding information, making judgements about its relevance and value, finding appropriate ways of noting it.
Stage 4: Shaping and communicating information	This is the outcome phase in which pupils think about how best to organise and present their findings. The better the original definition of the required outcome, the more likely pupils are to achieve it successfully.

Throughout the research process the aim should be for pupils not simply to find out and present the required information. They should also be reflecting on their own developing reading skills – how they are approaching the task, the skills they are employing, how they are overcoming difficulties and, in short, what they are learning about their own learning.

How to teach research skills

BEFORE THE LESSON

Be clear what the purpose of the task is. Too often in schools, research projects can be formless and too long, keeping pupils busy for a fair amount of time but not necessarily developing their reading skills or understanding of a subject in a way that merits the amount of the time devoted to it.

Stage 1: Establishing purpose

- Spend time setting up the project: be really specific about the final outcome, both in terms of the form (a poster, a presentation, a report) and also the audience (another class, younger readers, sixth form pupils).
- Encourage pupils to link the project to their prior learning: what they already know about the topic. Give them a short time to explore their existing learning and to ask some questions of their own about what they want to find out.

Stage 2: Locating information

- Link this stage to approaches to reading: get pupils thinking about which approaches they will use. Remember – the focus should be on the “how” of the task (the process) as much as they “what” (the final product).
- Focus pupils on the range of possible information sources. Use some skills-building activities to remind them how to use contents pages and indexes. Have part of a lesson in the library, with a ten-minute reminder from the librarian about information retrieval skills. Devise a mini-lesson which teaches pupils about using the internet. Set a topic such as a famous author. Get them to road-test different search engines and compare the results.
- Get pupils to make judgements about information, rather than just dutifully grabbing anything that they find. With the “famous author” topic, get them, in pairs or groups, to decide on the relevance of different facts. Get them comparing different accounts and exploring the difference between objectivity and subjectivity.
- Remember to model all of this yourself, actively showing pupils how effective readers work.

Stage 3: Interacting with the text

- Get pupils to think about the best way of recording information – e.g. road-test different grids and tables.
- Use starters to teach note-taking. Give a mini-lecture and ask pupils to make notes in different ways – using subheadings, using a spider diagram, using a table, using diagrams, using no structure at all. Get them talking about how they approached the task and how well they feel they did. Get them to decide, for their individual learning style, which approach suits them best.
- Explore the difference between fact and opinion – e.g. use a newspaper story vs editorial; look at extracts from an authorised/unauthorised biography

Stage 4: Shaping and communicating information

- Get pupils talking about how to take their research and re-present it in the required format.
- Focus on the needs of the audience – what will help to make the information interesting, relevant and entertaining for the audience.
- Spend some time focusing on the ingredients of an effective poster/PowerPoint/report. Look at text-type conventions. Compare good/bad models – e.g. demonstrating the tedium of endless bullet points and sound effects in PowerPoint presentations.
- For presentations, give pupils time to rehearse and prepare. Model a good presentational style – e.g. not reading notes, making eye contact, getting the pace and volume right.
- Get pupils to record their comments about the strengths and weaknesses of their own and others’ performances.
- Draw the project together by focusing not only on the quality of the finished products but also on the process – e.g. how has your research work improved? What reading skills have you developed? What have you learned?

How to teach note-making skills

Pupils are frequently asked, across all their subjects, to make notes. Too often they will be given a textbook or handout and blithely given the task of making notes. Some pupils will copy out chunks; others will write down lists of facts or information, irrespective of its relevance; others will do the task supremely well.

Few teachers, it seems, teach them how to make notes consistently and effectively.

Key stage 3 is when we should be ensuring that our pupils can make notes well, that they know what the phrase means and can do such tasks confidently and successfully, ready for key stage 4 and beyond.

Making notes involves a complex set of skills, including:

- close-reading, listening, watching;
- making sense of an original text;
- determining what is relevant;
- identifying relationships between ideas;
- understanding how the writer has arrived at the key ideas;
- critically reflecting on the validity of the ideas in the text;
- selecting ideas appropriate to the task;
- transforming the language of the original into a form which is meaningful to the reader, even when they are producing an *aide-memoire* for themselves;
- abbreviating language to produce a summary.

“Developing Reading”
in *Pedagogy and Practice: Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools*
(DCSF, 2004)

Pupils will really benefit from a cross-curricular approach to note-making, so that all teachers share the same conventions and expectations.

How to teach note-making skills

BEFORE THE LESSON

If you are asking pupils to make notes, think about why. What purpose will their notes serve? How detailed do they need to be? What do you envisage as a good set of notes? How detailed? How long? In what format? If you aren't clear about your expectations, and you don't communicate them, then don't be surprised if pupils' note-making skills prove inconsistent.

DURING THE LESSON

Focus on the micro-skills of note-making, as listed on the opposite page. If you want pupils to make notes as they watch a video, then model the process. Using a sample video extract, show them:

- how to manage the task (e.g. articulating the purpose of the task, using subheadings to note key information, using abbreviations to get information down quickly);
- what your own notes might look like; and
- how you decided what was and wasn't relevant.

Then let pupils practise, working in pairs to make notes on a different sequence. Get pairs of pupils comparing their notes with others' so that learning about note-making becomes a collaborative venture.

Use starter activities to practise note-making. Give pupils a sequence of two-minute mini-lectures on different topics for each starter (e.g. my memories of childhood; how to edit a movie) and require them to listen and make notes. Talk about the skills involved and the format of the notes. Get them comparing the finished results.

Use plenary sessions to get pupils articulating their developing confidence in note-making – what are the three most important skills? How do they decide what to note down and what to ignore? What have they learnt about note-making that they didn't know at the start of the lesson/week/term?

Link note-making to relevant grammatical principles – in particular, topic sentences and connectives. Demonstrate to pupils how writers use these to help the reader to follow ideas.

How to improve the readability of texts

The words and sentences used by authors are obviously an important factor in how well pupils can understand the texts. When you prepare your own handouts and worksheets, you need to think about the readability of the texts.

In practice, this means considering:

- the readability of the language;
- the presentation of the material.

Readability of texts is usually measured in “reading age”. A reading age of 14 indicates a text that could be read and just understood by a pupil of 14 with an average reading age.

Although this is inevitably based on generalisations about age and ability, it is a useful indicator of the level of difficulty of texts, and a reminder of the need to have your target audience in mind. For example:

- This short sentence needs a reading age of less than nine years.
- This longer sentence, which contains an adjectival clause and polysyllabic words, has a reading age of more than 16 years.

There are at least 200 readability tests, some of which are time-consuming to administer and interpret. However, your word-processing software is likely to have a readability function. If – as in Word – this reports a reading level in terms of an American grade, it is considered normal practice to add a value of 5 to create a UK-based reading level.

How to improve the readability of texts

Most important, view all texts you use from the point-of-view of your pupils. If you're presenting them with this text, then you want them to read and understand it – so what have you done to assist that process?

This will mean sometimes rejecting certain texts, or editing, or even rewriting them in order to ensure that they work in the classroom. You can also, of course, increase the readability of texts by paying attention specifically to layout and vocabulary (both are covered in separate spreads).

- ✓ Aim for:
 - accessibility – use the readability statistics tool on your word processor to investigate the language level of the text;
 - short paragraphs;
 - simple sentences at the start and end of paragraphs to help the reader to “tune into” the topic of the paragraph;
 - connectives that clearly mark the “direction” of a text – *because, then, next, first*.

- ✗ Avoid:
 - using long complex sentences too often;
 - using the passive mode where the active will do – for example, using unnecessarily complicated or unfamiliar vocabulary.

Here is how you might take a complicated text and improve its readability:

Before rewriting	After rewriting
<p>Morphine, C17H19NO3, is the most abundant of opium’s 24 alkaloids, accounting for 9 to 14% of opium-extract by mass. Named after the Roman god of dreams, Morpheus, who also became the god of slumber, the drug morphine, appropriately enough, numbs pain, alters mood and induces sleep. Morphine and its related synthetic derivatives, known as opioids, are so far unbeatable at dulling chronic or so-called “slow” pain, but unfortunately they are all physically addictive. During the American Civil War, 400,000 soldiers became addicted to morphine.</p>	<p>Morphine is a powerful sleeping drug. It is named after Morpheus, the Roman god of slumber and is famous for numbing pain, changing our moods and making people sleepy. With its related forms (known as opioids) it is unbeatable at dulling severe pain. However, it is also highly addictive and in the American Civil War, 400,000 soldiers became addicted to it. Morphine is also known as C17H19NO3 and is made from an extract of opium (a seed in poppy plants).</p>
<p>Reading age: 17</p>	<p>Reading age: 14</p>

Source: *Morphine* by Enrico Uva, LaurenHill Academy, Montreal, Canada (edited)
<http://www.emsb.qc.ca/laurenhill/science/morphine.html>

How to use layout features to make texts more accessible

SPACING

Lack of spacing creates something called “grey pages”, where there is simply too much text. Readers should be able to look at a page and distinguish between headlines, subheadings, columns and captions.

Space at the top and bottom of a page is important for framing a document. Spacious side margins also encourage us to read a text. You might also consider using several columns to a page for certain texts. Long lines of small type are tiring to read because each line requires several left-to-right eye movements. On the other hand, excessively narrow columns can contain too many hyphens and therefore make comprehension more difficult.

Avoiding widows (a line starting a new paragraph at the foot of a page) and orphans (a line of continuing text at the top of a page) can also assist readers’ comprehension.

Justification can affect the readability of a text. Right justification can look attractive to the eye (because it creates a neat margin on the right-hand edge of the page – but it is generally harder to read and can make the spacing between words erratic. This page is right justified.

FONT STYLES

There are thousands of fonts, but they fall into two basic families:

- **SERIF:** This bullet text is in the serif font Times New Roman. Serifs are the small embellishments at the end of the characters: for example the foot at the bottom of the letter T.
- **SANS SERIF:** This bullet text is in the sans serif font Arial. Sans serif fonts have no embellishments.

Sans serif fonts are usually considered easier to read. **Many teachers like to use comic sans because of its reassuring, informal style.** The main rule of fonts is not to combine too many in the same paragraph: it looks confusing.

OTHER LAYOUT FEATURES

A section of reversed text – white text on black shading – can add visual variety and draw the reader’s attention to a new section of meaning. However, it can also give undue prominence to a minor subsection of information and – depending on the font style and size – can prove difficult to read. Overused, it can become fussy and distracting.

Subheadings can help to guide a reader through the direction of a text’s argument. Cross-headers are particularly useful: they pick out a key word from the paragraph that follows them, thus helping the reader to gain the gist of the text.

How to use layout features to make texts more accessible

Before asking pupils to read with texts, be clear why you are using it. Is it appropriate and accessible for all pupils?



Aim for:

- spacious presentation (as much white page as black text);
- use of typographical features: headlines and subheadings that capture the pupils' interest and lead them into a subject (e.g. "The shocking downfall: why does Macbeth sink from hero to villain?");
- bold, italic, underline, different font styles and sizes (though not too many in a single document);
- boxes, shaded panels, vertical lines to add visual interest;
- use of columns to make reading more efficient;
- short paragraphs;
- subheadings (especially cross-headers) to guide the reader;
- final summary of key facts/main information;
- glossary of key words.



Avoid:

- densely packed writing;
- cramped margins;
- excessive use of upper-case lettering;
- poor reprographics;
- lack of images/typographical features;
- excessive use of colour (which can actually prove distracting).

How to teach about language change

This is a very brisk summary of the way in which the vocabulary (or lexis) of English has been influenced by other languages.

From classical languages ...

- From Latin – vocabulary of learning, exploration, science: circumference, conjunction, compassion, contemporary, malnutrition, multilingual, submarine, substantial, suburb, supernatural, transfer and hundreds more
- From Greek – vocabulary of science and technology, plus a surprising number of common words: act, art, beauty, colour, crime, fact, fate, fork, hour, human, idea, justice, language, law, matter, music, nature, number, place, reason, school, sense, sex, space, time

From Germanic and French origins ...

- The lexicon of old English is almost wholly Germanic: father, mother, brother, man, wife, ground, house, land, tree, grass, summer and winter. Old English verbs include: bring, come, get, hear, meet, see, sit, stand, think
- French gives us: city, place, village, court, palace, manor, mansion, residence, domicile, cuisine, diner, café, liberty, veracity, carpenter, draper, haberdasher, mason, painter, plumber, tailor. In modern times many terms relating to cooking, fashion, drama, winemaking, literature, art, diplomacy and ballet also come from France.

Other borrowings ...

- English has acquired many words from Spanish. Some of these came directly into English, especially in the age of sea travel and conquest: cigar, armada, guerrilla, matador, mosquito, tornado.
- Italian contributes to the English lexicon in many ways. The technical lexicon of classical music is almost wholly Italian: Allegro, brio, forte, piano, pizzicato, sotto voce; plus ciabatta, chianti, lasagna, macaroni, pasta, spaghetti.

From Arabic ...

- alcohol, alchemy, algebra, alkali, almanac, arsenal, assassin, cipher, elixir, mosque, naphtha, sugar, syrup, zenith, zero

Common words borrowed from other languages are:

- hammock, hurricane, maize, tobacco (Caribbean)
- gull (Cornish)
- howitzer, robot (Czech)
- brogue, blarney, clan, plaid, shamrock (Gaelic and Irish)
- ukulele (Hawaiian)
- bungalow, dungarees, jodhpurs, jungle, loot, polo, pyjamas, shampoo, thug (Hindi)
- paprika (Hungarian)
- bonsai, sumo, origami (Japanese)
- bamboo, ketchup, orang-utan (Malay)
- paradise, lilac, bazaar, caravan, chess, shawl, khaki (Persian)
- taboo, tattoo (Polynesian)
- flamingo, marmalade, veranda (Portuguese)
- mammoth, soviet, vodka (Russian)
- coffee (Turkish)
- flannel (Welsh)

How to teach about language change

BEFORE THE LESSON

The spirit of studying language change is not to focus on historical information, but instead to get pupils actively exploring the way English has changed and keeps changing.

TEACHING APPROACHES

To get pupils actively exploring the topic you could:

- ask pupils to think about slang words meaning “good” that they use today, and then to see if they can think of words with a similar meaning used by their parents or grandparents. They might come up with words like: *Great, kosha, fab, groovy, brill, wicked, topping, spiffing, smashing.*
- get pupils talking about which of these words are heard today and which have fallen out of fashion. They could put them in rank order of most cringeworthy to least cringeworthy!
- explore words which have come into English from other languages, using dictionaries – for example:
 - garage, suede, moustache (French)*
 - balcony, volcano, studio (Italy)*
 - aligator, hurricane, potato (Spanish)*
 - pyjama, bungalow, shampoo, thug (India)*
 - budgerigar, boomerang (Australia)*
 - deck, freighter, dollar, yacht (Dutch)*
 - anorak (Eskimo)*
 - coffee (Turkey)*

To explore language change in texts, you could:

- place two very short extracts of text side-by-side – for example, the opening of *Jane Eyre* with a modern version; or the a verse from the King James Bible alongside a modern version (the Dorling Kindersley version works well);
- look at an example of a prose fiction or non-fiction text – for example, a short extract from Samuel Pepys’s diary, or *Jane Eyre*. Pupils imagine it is the opening of their own story. How would they change its vocabulary and/or sentence structure for a modern audience?

There was no possibility of taking a walk. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further outdoor exercise was now out of the question.

- ask pupils to compare a simplified version of a pre-1914 text, such as this modern rewrite of *Jane Eyre*:
 - It was winter. The weather was very cold and it was raining. We could not go outside. I was glad; I never liked walks with my cousins, John, Eliza and Georgina Reed. (Sue Ullstein, Longman Classics);*
- ask pupils to explore how this works, whether the effect is over-simplified, staccato, disjointed. Why does the writer keep a semi-colon in her version? What effect does it have?

LEARNING REVIEW

To deepen pupils’ understanding, get them actively rewriting a short extract of text, possibly in pairs. Take the opening of a pre-1900 text, say an extract from Pepys’s diary or the first paragraph of a Dickens novel, or a Bible story. Try to use something which contains some unfamiliar vocabulary. Pupils write an updated version for modern readers.

Get them to annotate it or create a display of the main changes they made. Create lists of words from other cultures, or posters of words we no longer use today. You could run a sequence of starters – along the *Call My Bluff* line – in which pupils explore unfamiliar words, saying where the words come from.

How to teach pupils to comment on language use

This is one part of English teaching which can prove immensely frustrating for us, because for many pupils, being asked to analyse a text and comment on the language can prove an arid and passive experience. They often don't like doing it.

Yet for many of us, as English teachers, we cut our teeth on looking closely at writers' language, at analysing texts and subtexts, and relished the intellectual satisfaction of the process.

It is hard, then, to deal with even our keenest pupils appearing to lose interest quickly or ask us, "What's the point?"

The best approach is to get pupils approaching all texts as if they were themselves writers. That's what's intended in the Framework's sub-strand "Reading to understand the writer's craft", and I tend to use it in all the work on reading skills I undertake with classes. It poses the underlying question: If you had written this, what would you have done differently? Reading a text isn't, then, something we approach in order simply to admire or worship, but something that we compare with our own ideas and skills. It moves from being passive to active reflection.

Then, keep it simple but structured, using the questions on the facing page. Part of the problem for many of our pupils is that, faced with a text and asked to analyse it, they aren't sure what to look for. They aren't sure what to say, or how to say it.

This strand, therefore, is about teaching pupils to read, and to write, as well as developing their confidence in exploring language. That's why, as teachers, we should aim to model the language we would expect pupils to use in their comments, as the page opposite suggests.

How to teach pupils to comment on language use

Pupils benefit from a framework which helps them to know what to look for. Here's a starting point in which I've used some technical language because, paradoxically, this can encourage pupils to see that they are learning specific skills and knowledge. Notice also that it provides some specific vocabulary that they might use in their response.

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

- What's the text about? Who's it for? What's its purpose? Where would you find it? What's its tone (*serious, comic, formal, informal* – which words help you to know?)?

STRUCTURE

- How is the text organised? Does it tell a story using a chronological sequence? Or is it non-linear? Which connectives show you how it coheres (e.g. *then, later, next; or because, although, despite*)?

SENTENCES

- Are sentences simple, compound (linked by *and, but* or *or*) or complex? Does this create a style which is *informative, clear, conversational, colloquial, formal, complex, complicated, convoluted*? Does the text use declarative sentences (statements), questions, instructions? Does it use rhetorical questions? Does it use minor (verbless) sentences? Does it use typographical features such as bullet points and lists? What's the overall effect – *clear, dense, structured, logical, personal, emotional, authoritative*?

WORDS AND PHRASES

- Is the vocabulary from the common register (familiar everyday words), the technical/scientific register (used in scientific and technological writing), the colloquial (informal) register, or the literary register (found in novels and autobiographies)? Are words simple, familiar, monosyllabic (one syllable), Anglo-Saxon? Are they complex and polysyllabic (many syllables)? Are there poetic words, metaphors, similes, alliteration? Are they slang or jargon, or technical terms?

Then, as a teacher, model what your first sentence and then your first paragraph of a commentary on a text might look like, describing aloud the decisions and choices you are making in the way you express your ideas: "This text is quite a formal one, using complex vocabulary like polysyllabic. This suggests that it is written for an audience that already knows a bit about the subject because...".

Show how you embed quotations; how you avoid saying "I think"; how you use "suggests" rather than "shows".

In other words, teach pupils how to analyse and then how to express their ideas in appropriate language. It's something they will need to practise, but where you'll quickly see their skills and confidence developing.

Glossary

- Ablaut** The process of inflecting a verb by changing its vowel: sing, sang, sung
- Active and passive** The passive voice turns a sentence around so that the object comes first and the subject is placed later – like this: “The wind destroyed the greenhouse.” (ACTIVE)
The passive voice places emphasis on what happened rather than who did it: “The greenhouse was destroyed by the wind.” (PASSIVE)
The passive voice will sometimes leave the subject out altogether: “The greenhouse was destroyed.” (PASSIVE)
The passive voice is not very common in most speech and writing. It is, however, a feature of certain text-types: scientific, technical and legal writing, as well as some journalism, sometimes adopt the passive voice. It can be useful where the speaker/writer wishes to:
- withhold information;
 - conceal information;
 - build suspense;
 - give emphasis to what happened rather than who did it.
- Adjective** A word that describes or qualifies a noun or pronoun, e.g. it was a *tedious* match; she is *vile*. Adjectives add descriptive power by qualifying (we made a *late* start) or reinforcing a noun (he possessed a *hypnotic* charm).
- Adverb** A word which gives more information about a verb, adjective or other adverb. Adverbs can tell us about:
- manner (he walked *slowly*);
 - place (he walked *there*);
 - time (he walked *yesterday*);
 - gradation (we don’t see him *enough*);
 - frequency (we *hardly ever* go there);
 - viewpoint (I wouldn’t travel, *personally*);
 - a link to an earlier idea (*therefore* he left);
 - attitude (*strangely*, it vanished).
- The idea that adverbs usually end -ly isn’t always helpful: *quite*, *very*, *so* are all adverbs. Nor is it helpful to think that adverbs only modify verbs:
- modifying a verb: He moved *wearily* down the winding lane.
 - modifying an adjective: He moved *wearily* down the *gently* winding lane.
 - modifying an adverb: He moved *very* *wearily* down the *gently* winding lane.
- It is useful to encourage pupils to avoid piling adverbs up in their writing.

- Agreement** The process in which a verb is altered to match the number, person and gender of its subject or object: he smiles (not smile) vs they smile (not smiles). This is an important issue when comparing Standard English with other dialects: agreement is often one point of difference.
- Apostrophe** A punctuation mark used to clarify two types of meaning:
- 1 It shows when two words have been compressed (is + not = isn't). We use this type of expression more in informal situations.
 - 2 It shows that something belongs to someone (Pete's holiday).
The apostrophe can inform the reader about whether the noun is singular (just one) or plural (more than one) according to its position. For example: in *we saw the vandal's damage*, the placing of the apostrophe after *vandal* shows that there is just one vandal. In *we saw the vandals' damage*, the apostrophe is placed after the plural, *vandals*, so that there is more than one vandal.
- Note the use of apostrophes for possession in: *in a week's time* and *in two years' time*.
- Note that *its* is a pronoun, like *her* and *his*, and has a different meaning from *it's* (= *it is*).
- Article** Word class containing words that modify a noun, such as *the, a, an* and *some*. Nowadays usually subsumed in the determiner category.
- Auxiliary verb** This is a verb form we put in front of a main verb to change its meaning. There are two main types:
- 1 primary auxiliaries: *be, do, have* (e.g. I am speaking; he does speak; you have spoken).
 - 2 modal auxiliaries: *can/could, may/might, must, shall/should, will/would*. Auxiliaries allow us to express a huge range of meanings and emotions (especially if we add **not**):
 - I have not spoken.
 - I would speak.
 - I could have spoken.
 - I would not have been speaking.
- Back-formation** The process of creating a simple word from a complex word not originally derived from the simple word – e.g. *to burgle* (from *burglar*)
- Bahuvrihi** A compound word that refers to someone by what he does rather than what he is – e.g. *four-eyes, cut-throat*
- Clause** A group of words formed around a verb. They are used to make up sentences. This compound sentence contains two clauses linked by *and*:
The car left the track and the crowd were terrified.
- The complex sentence below also contains two clauses. One is the **main clause** (it carries the main information); the second is the **subordinate or dependent clause** (it gives background detail):
The car left the track, leaving the crowd terrified.
- Collocation** A string of words commonly used together: e.g. *in the line of fire*

Colon	Punctuation mark that shows that something else follows within the sentence. Useful to precede lists and quotations, but also building anticipation: <i>She knew as she opened the door that there was danger: she was right.</i>
Comma	<p>Commas are used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to separate items in a list or strings of adjectives, e.g. <i>the dark, mysterious substance</i>; • to introduce direct speech and replace the full stop at the end of the spoken sentence (He said, “Hi.” “Hello,” she replied.); • to mark off a relative clause, e.g. <i>the light, which had seemed so strong, had now faded</i>; • to mark off many connecting adverbs, e.g. <i>ruthlessly, he lifted the sword</i>; • to attach a question tag to a statement, e.g. <i>this makes sense, doesn't it?</i> • after a subordinate clause or phrase which begins a sentence, e.g. <i>Despite the terrible snow, he set off home.</i> <p>Parenthetical commas, in pairs, bracket off a word, phrase or clause: <i>The house, abandoned eight years ago, had lights on</i></p>
Compound	Word formed by joining two words together – e.g. babysitter, blackbird
Conjunction	A word used for joining words, phrases and clauses within sentences. The most commonly used examples are and , but , or .
Connective	A word or phrase that helps us to make connections between different ideas in a text. Typical examples include: <i>on the other hand</i> ; <i>however</i> ; <i>in fact</i> . Each of these hints that the sentence or paragraph which follows will connect with what has gone before – giving a different argument (<i>on the other hand/however</i>) or adding more information (<i>in fact</i>).
Conversion	Deriving a new word by changing the word class of the old word – e.g. to impact (from noun impact); a good read (from verb to read)
Dashes	Punctuation marks used to add information, or sometimes to bracket off ideas: London – that wonderful city – is bathed in sunshine.
Determiner	Word class containing articles and similar words before nouns and noun phrases: e.g. a , the , their , more , many , my
Dialect	A variety of English. Standard English, although a minority dialect, is prestigious because it is used in education, law, the media, and is the dialect used for most written forms.
Diphthong	Vowel sound consisting of two vowels pronounced together (e.g. bIte, mAke)
Direct speech	A speaker's words or thoughts, placed within speech marks
Dynamic and stative verbs	Dynamic verbs describe actions (to hit, to travel, to jump). Stative verbs describe states of mind (to think, to hope, to be).
Early modern English	English of Shakespeare and the King James Bible, spoken from around 1450 to 1700
Eponym	Noun derived from a name – e.g. a scrooge, a shylock

Exclamation mark	Punctuation mark used to show urgency or emotion
Full stop	Punctuation mark used to mark the ends of sentences
Gerund	Noun formed out of a verb by adding -ing (e.g. his constant whining)
Head	The key word in a phrase that determines the meaning of the whole – e.g. the MAN in the grey suit; the old grey LIZARD
Homophones	Words that are identical in sound (their/there; no/know)
Hyphen	Punctuation mark used to join two words together (second-hand means something different from second hand)
Imperative	Form of a verb used to give a command – e.g. jump!
Infinitive	Form of a verb that lacks a tense and stands for the verb as a whole – e.g. to think
Inflection	The way words change their shape to show, for example, that they are singular or plural (e.g. <i>door</i> becomes <i>doors</i>) and to indicate tense (e.g. <i>think</i> becomes <i>thinks/thought</i>)
Intransitive	Verb that can appear without an object – e.g. we dined (as opposed to “he devoured the steak” – devoured cannot stand without the object)
Irregular form	Word with an unusual inflected form rather than following the usual rules of inflection (e.g. <i>brought</i> not <i>bringed</i> , <i>mice</i> not <i>mouses</i>)
Middle English	Language spoken in England shortly after the Norman invasion in 1066 to the Great Vowel Shift of the 1400s
Minor sentence	A sentence which contains no verb. Advertising uses a lot of minor sentences: <i>Abb Bisto! The ultimate driving machine.</i> Sometimes they might be answers to questions: <i>Yes.</i> Exclamations are also frequently presented as minor sentences: <i>Agghb!</i>
Modern English	Variety of English spoken since the eighteenth century
Modification	Modification allows us to add detail to texts. For example, we can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modify a noun with an adjective: the <i>old</i> taxi; • modify a noun with a phrase: the taxi <i>in the street</i>; • modify a noun with a clause: the taxi <i>which smelt awful</i>; • modify an adjective with an adverb: the <i>very</i> old taxi; • modify a verb with an adverb: the taxi was waiting <i>noisily</i>; • modify a verb with a phrase: the taxi was waiting <i>in the street</i>; • modify a verb with a clause: the taxi was waiting, <i>which made me worried.</i>
Morpheme	A group of letters which cannot stand on their own, but they can be added to root words to change their meaning (e.g. pre-, de-, -ly)
Noun	A word which labels a person, thing or idea. There are four types of noun: common: the <i>radio</i> , a <i>cloud</i> proper: <i>Mike</i> , <i>Woolworth</i> abstract: <i>peace</i> , <i>hope</i> collective: <i>herd</i> of goats, <i>pod</i> of whales
Old English	Language spoken in England from around 450 to 1100

Paragraph	<p>A group of sentences linked together by their theme or topic. Paragraphs are useful in fiction in texts for a number of effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change of speaker • change of time • change of place • change of viewpoint <p>In non-fiction texts, paragraphs are used for these reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change of topic • to make new point within topic • change of time • change of viewpoint
Participle	Form of the verb which cannot stand alone but needs an auxiliary or other verb in front – e.g. he has <i>eaten</i> (perfect participle); he was <i>eaten</i> (passive participle); he is <i>eating</i> (present participle)
Passive voice	See active and passive.
Phrase	A group of words which makes sense within a clause or sentence but cannot stand on its own – e.g. <i>the unpleasant smell, shouting loudly</i>
Pluperfect	A past tense showing an action that has already been completed some time in the past: when I arrived, John <i>had fainted</i>
Plural	More than one. Most nouns add <i>s</i> to make a plural. Some nouns are only plural: <i>knickers, jeans</i> (called <i>pluralia tantum</i> , in case you're interested). Some are singular and plural: <i>sheep</i> .
Prefix	Letters added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning (e.g. <i>dis+honour</i>)
Preposition	A word used chiefly to show where something or someone is: <i>under, through, on</i> .
Preterite	Simple past-tense form of a verb – e.g. <i>he walked; he sang</i> (as opposed to using participle <i>he has walked</i>)
Progressive	Verb form that shows an ongoing event – e.g. he is <i>waving</i> his hands
Pronoun	A word which can be used in place of a noun – e.g. the Prime Minister visited today. Did <i>you</i> see <i>him</i> ?
Punctuation	The marks we use in writing to help the reader understand our ideas. Their use can be vital in clarifying our meaning, as in this classic example: <i>King Charles I prayed half an hour after he was beheaded</i> (a strategically placed full stop and comma change the meaning: <i>King Charles prayed. Half an hour after, he was beheaded.</i>)
Question mark	Punctuation mark used to indicate that the sentence is a question. In speech, we raise the pitch of our voice at the end to show that the sentence is a question.
Register	The way we change our use of language in different situations. We might use a formal register in an interview (“I am particularly interested in socialising with friends”) or an informal register with friends (“Fancy a drink?”).
Relative clauses	<p>A group of words built around a verb that you can add to sentences to give more detail. Take a simple sentence like “My bedroom is a bomb site.”</p> <p>Add a relative clause after the subject: “My bedroom, which I tidied last week, is a bomb site.”</p>

	You can add relative clauses at other points too: “My bedroom is a bombsite, which is very annoying.”
Relative pronouns	Words such as <i>who</i> , <i>which</i> and <i>that</i> used at the start of relative clauses.
Root words	Words which we can add prefixes and suffixes to in order to change their meanings
Schwa	The neutral vowels in mothEr, accidEnt, station
Semi-colon	Punctuation mark somewhere in strength between a full stop and a comma. It often replaces the word <i>and</i> between clauses and phrases.
Sentence	A group of words which can stand on their own. We expect sentences to: contain a main verb begin with a capital letter; end with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.
Sentence functions	The purposes of sentences: statements, questions, commands and exclamations
Sentence types	simple, compound and complex
Singular	See Plural.
Standard English	The most important dialect or variety of English. It is used in most written texts, in education, in law, in the media. It is the form of English defined in dictionaries.
Stem	The main portion of a word that prefixes and suffixes are added to
Subject and object	The subject is the person or thing in a sentence that is doing the action of the verb. (In “Helen threw the towel to Lucy”, Helen is the subject – she is doing the throwing.)
Subjunctive	Verb form that indicates a hypothetical state of affairs – e.g. if I <i>were</i> you ...
Suffix	letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning – e.g. peace+ <i>ful</i>
Synonym	A word which has a similar meaning to another word. Synonyms for house include: <i>house</i> , <i>home</i> , <i>abode</i> , <i>my place</i> , <i>pad</i> . You would choose different words according to the register you used.
Tense	English changes the ending of verbs to show the present and past tenses: She laugh+s ... she laugh+ed To show the future tense, we sometimes use the present tense verb with an adverbial: The bus leaves <i>later</i> . The bus leaves <i>in three minutes</i> . The bus leaves <i>next week</i> . We can also create future tense by using modal verbs – will/would/shall/might: The bus <i>will</i> leave in three minutes. The bus <i>might</i> leave next week.

- Topic sentence** A sentence at the start of a text or paragraph which tells you what the content will be. Newspaper stories usually start with topic sentences: they tell you who, where, when. For example:
Local headteacher Howard Lay, 44, was recovering from a bizarre accident at school last night.
- Verb** A word which tells us what someone or something is doing – e.g. she *noticed* the car. It *came* to a halt.
- Verb phrase** Sometimes we use a number of verbs together to add detail, for example about tense (when something happened). For example:
I see
see = main verb
I have seen = verb phrase (seen = main verb, have = auxiliary verb)
I will see = verb phrase (see = main verb, will = auxiliary verb)
I would have seen = verb phrase (seen = main verb, would = auxiliary verb, have = auxiliary verb)
- Word class** A group of words with a particular function in a sentence – nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and so on.

Further reading

ENGLISH TEACHING

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