



Department  
for Education

# English language

**GCSE subject content and assessment  
objectives**

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## Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements and the possibilities for progression to A level.

## Subject aims and learning outcomes

This document sets out the learning outcomes and content coverage required for GCSE specifications in English language. In subjects such as English language, where topics are taught in progressively greater depth over the course of key stage 3 and key stage 4, GCSE outcomes may reflect or build upon subject content which is typically taught at key stage 3. There is no expectation that teaching of such content should be repeated during the GCSE course where it has already been covered at an earlier stage.

GCSE specifications in English language should ensure students can read fluently and write effectively. They should be able to demonstrate a confident control of Standard English and they should be able to write grammatically correct sentences, deploy figurative language and analyse texts.

GCSE specifications in English language should enable students to:

- read a wide range of texts, fluently and with good understanding
- read critically, and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write effectively and coherently using Standard English appropriately
- use grammar correctly, punctuate and spell accurately
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology<sup>1</sup>, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

In addition, GCSE specifications in English language must enable students to:

- listen to and understand spoken language, and use spoken Standard English effectively.

Spoken language will be reported on as part of the qualification, but it will not form part of the final mark and grade.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the glossary of grammatical terms that supports the national curriculum programmes of study for English.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/244218/English\\_Appendix\\_2\\_-\\_Vocabulary\\_grammar\\_and\\_punctuation.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244218/English_Appendix_2_-_Vocabulary_grammar_and_punctuation.pdf)

## Subject content

This document sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in English language. Awarding organisations may, however, use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

All texts in the examination will be ‘unseen’, that is, students will not have studied the examination texts during the course. These unseen texts will be drawn from each of the three centuries referred to below.

GCSE English language is designed on the basis that students should read and be assessed on high-quality, challenging texts from the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Each text studied must represent a substantial piece of writing, making significant demands on students in terms of content, structure and the quality of language. The texts, across a range of genres and types, should support students in developing their own writing by providing effective models. The texts must include literature and extended literary non-fiction, and other writing such as essays, reviews and journalism (both printed and online). Texts that are essentially transient, such as instant news feeds, must not be included. The number and types of texts, and their length, are not prescribed.

## Scope of study

GCSE specifications in English language should require students to study the following content:

### Critical reading and comprehension

- *critical reading and comprehension*: identifying and interpreting themes, ideas and information in a range of literature and other high-quality writing; reading in different ways for different purposes, and comparing and evaluating the usefulness, relevance and presentation of content for these purposes; drawing inferences and justifying these with evidence; supporting a point of view by referring to evidence within the text; identifying bias and misuse of evidence, including distinguishing between statements that are supported by evidence and those that are not; reflecting critically and evaluatively on text, using the context of the text and drawing on knowledge and skills gained from wider reading; recognising the possibility of different responses to a text
- *summary and synthesis*: identifying the main theme or themes; summarising ideas and information from a single text; synthesising from more than one text
- *evaluation of a writer’s choice of vocabulary, form, grammatical and structural features*: explaining and illustrating how vocabulary and grammar contribute to effectiveness and impact, using linguistic and literary terminology accurately to do

so and paying attention to detail; analysing and evaluating how form and structure contribute to the effectiveness and impact of a text

- *comparing texts*: comparing two or more texts critically with respect to the above.

## Writing

- *producing clear and coherent text*: writing effectively for different purposes and audiences: to describe, narrate, explain, instruct, give and respond to information, and argue; selecting vocabulary, grammar, form, and structural and organisational features judiciously to reflect audience, purpose and context; using language imaginatively and creatively; using information provided by others to write in different forms; maintaining a consistent point of view; maintaining coherence and consistency across a text
- *writing for impact*: selecting, organising and emphasising facts, ideas and key points; citing evidence and quotation effectively and pertinently to support views; creating emotional impact; using language creatively, imaginatively and persuasively, including rhetorical devices (such as rhetorical questions, antithesis, parenthesis).

## Spoken language

- *presenting information and ideas*: selecting and organising information and ideas effectively and persuasively for prepared spoken presentations; planning effectively for different purposes and audiences; making presentations and speeches
- *responding to spoken language*: listening to and responding appropriately to any questions and feedback
- *spoken Standard English*: expressing ideas using Standard English whenever and wherever appropriate.

## Assessment objectives

<b>READING</b> (50%)	
Read and understand a range of texts to:	
<b>AO1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas</li> <li>▪ Select and synthesise evidence from different texts</li> </ul>
<b>AO2</b>	Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views
<b>AO3</b>	Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts
<b>AO4</b>	Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references
<b>WRITING</b> (50%)	
<b>AO5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences</li> <li>▪ Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts</li> </ul>
<b>AO6</b>	Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation. (This requirement must constitute 20% of the marks for each specification as a whole.)
<b>SPOKEN LANGUAGE</b> ( <i>Unweighted</i> )	
<b>AO7</b>	Demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting
<b>AO8</b>	Listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback to presentations
<b>AO9</b>	Use spoken Standard English effectively in speeches and presentations.



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