Primary English Glossary

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Primary English Glossary
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Primary Literacy Glossary

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Active and passive voice

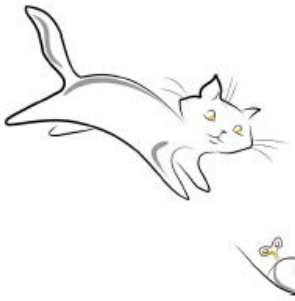
The cat chased the mouse; the mouse was chased by the cat. Learn to identify active and passive voice in sentences and support your child's Year 6 grammar knowledge and understanding.

A sentence is written in **active** voice **when the subject of the sentence is performing the action.**

A sentence is written in **passive** voice **when the subject of the sentence has something done to it by someone or something.**

For example:

The cat was chasing the mouse.



The mouse was being chased by the cat.

Active voice: ***The cat was chasing the mouse.***

In this sentence, 'the cat' is the subject, 'was chasing' is the verb and 'the mouse' is the object.

Passive voice: ***The mouse was being chased by the cat.***

In this sentence 'the mouse' has become the subject which is having something done to it by the cat.

How are the active and passive voice taught and used?

People tend to use the active voice rather than the passive voice when they are writing, but **the passive voice is often used for particular reasons.** For example:

Graffiti had been scrawled all over the wall.

Here, we don't know the identity of the person who has done the graffiti, so the sentence is written in the passive voice.

The votes have been counted.

Here, who counted the votes it is not important, but the fact that they have been counted is important. You could also say that the most important thing in the sentence is the votes, which is why they are mentioned first in the sentence, rather than last as they would be would be in the active voice ('*People counted the votes*').

Year 6 children learn about the active and passive voice as part of their work on English grammar. They will be shown how to use it in their writing as a way of varying sentence structure. They may also be tested on passive sentences in the KS2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test which Y6 children sit as part of their Year 6 English SATs.

active passive
passive active
active passive
passive active
active passive

Adjective

Adjectives describe nouns, but how will your child be taught to use them correctly? We explain how word banks and a thesaurus can help improve your child's writing by encouraging them to use effective, powerful adjectives in their work.

Adjectives are words used to describe and give more information about a noun, which could be a person, place or object.

Children are encouraged to use adjectives in their stories to make them more interesting for the reader. It is very common for children to race ahead with the action of a story, and they often need reminding to stop and think about what a character looks like or feels or how they might describe the setting of their story.

How are children taught about adjectives in the classroom?

Children need to get into the habit of using adjectives from a young age, so that this skill becomes instinctive in their writing. From Y3 onwards they will be expected to start using more sophisticated adjectives. For example, in Key Stage 1 they may use the word 'scary'. In Key Stage 2 they would need to start thinking of other words for 'scary', synonyms such as: 'terrifying', 'haunting', 'chilling', 'creepy', 'intimidating' or 'menacing'. Use of a thesaurus can help with finding more effective adjectives.

Children in Key Stage 2 will develop their use of adjectives by forming similes.

For example, in Key Stage 1 you might expect a child to write the sentence:

She touched the warm, yellow sand.

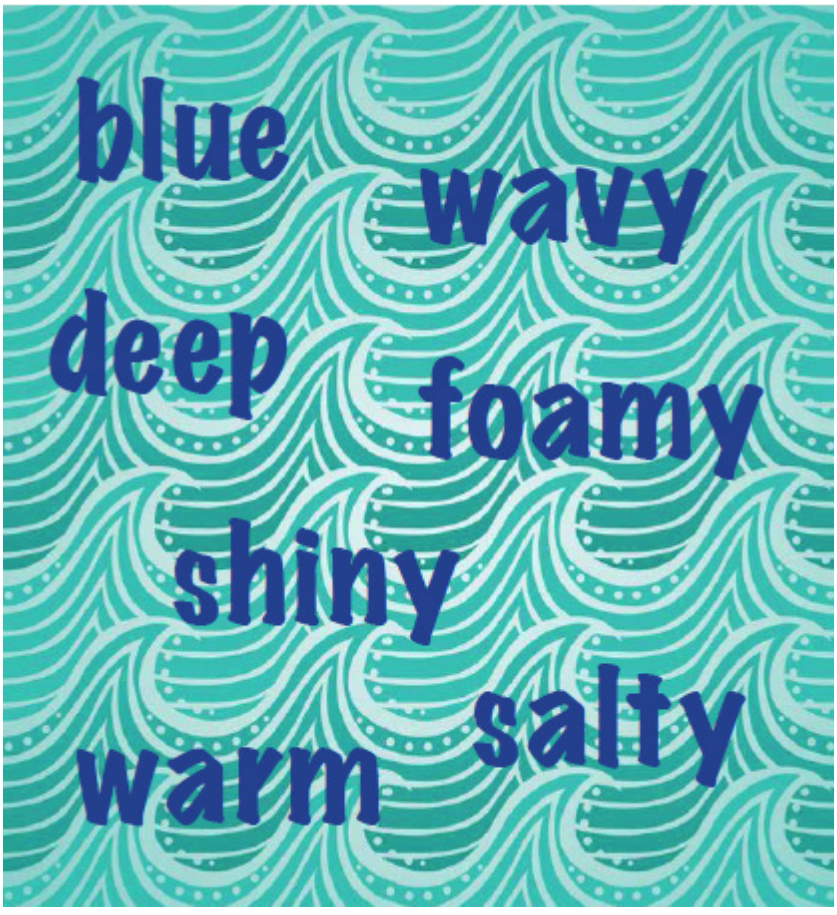
But in Key Stage 2, you would want them to move onto a more detailed description of the sand, incorporating a simile:

The pale, fine sand ran through her fingers, as soft as silk.

How do children learn to use adjectives in their writing?

These are some ways that teachers encourage children to use adjectives in their writing:

- Preparing a word bank of adjectives for the child to have by their side while they are writing, to help them improve their description.
- Underlining nouns when marking a child's writing, with a written comment to prompt them to add an adjective to the noun.
- Modelling how to incorporate adjectives into writing on the board.
- Providing a thesaurus so that children can find more interesting adjectives that they might not have previously known.
- Having a list of adjectives as part of a class display that children constantly add to.



Adverbs

Adverbs give us more information about a verb, explaining how, when, where or why an action is taking place. We explain how children are taught to use adverbs to improve their writing in KS2, and how you can help at home.

An adverb is a word which modifies a verb, which means that it tells you **how, when, where** or **why** something is being done.

Consider the following sentence:

I called to my little sister.

If you add an adverb, it gives the reader more information about the characters or the action in the sentence, for example:

*I called **angrily** to my little sister. OR I called **excitedly** to my little sister.*

tells us more about the feelings of the person involved.

Adverb facts

Adverbs can be of time, of place, of manner and of degree.

Adverbs usually end in -ly, but there are lots of exceptions (fast, never, well, very, now, yesterday, here, there).

Teachers sometimes give children word banks to support them with using adverbs for different purposes, for example:

Movement	Feelings	Sound
energetically	cautiously	loudly
gracefully	viciously	silently
rapidly	kindly	quietly
quickly	nastily	noisily
slowly	carelessly	musically
slothfully	wilfully	discordantly
jerkily	sorrowfully	softly

Adverbs can modify adjectives or other adverbs as well as verbs.

How do children learn to use adverbs?

Children are encouraged to use adverbs in their story-writing in **Key Stage 2**. These are some of the methods teachers might use to help them:

- When a teacher is **modelling writing on the board**, they might ask children for various adverbs to add to a particular sentence. This is a kind of brainstorming that allows children to share ideas with each other and improve writing through a collaborative input.

- Teachers might ask children to **look out for good adverbs** when they are reading. These might be written in a list on a display for children to use when they are writing.

- Teachers might give children **word banks of adverbs** to refer to when they are working on a piece of writing.

- Teachers might **underline verbs in a child's writing** and ask them to add an adverb to their verbs.

- From **Year 4**, children are taught to use 'fronted adverbials'. This is when an adverb or adverbial phrase is placed at the start of a sentence (followed by a comma), to explain how or when something is being done. For example:

Later that day, I fed the dog.

Cautiously, I opened the door.

With a heavy heart, I told my son the playground was closed.

Alliteration, assonance and consonance

When analysing poetry your primary-school child might mention alliteration, assonance and consonance. We explain what they've been taught to look out for in literacy lessons.

Alliteration is the repetition of an initial letter or sound in closely connected words (for example, in the sentence: '*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*', many of the words start with the letter p).

Alliteration is often used in **poetry** to create an effect. The repeated sound is in the stressed syllable of the word: *The dreaded dawn arrived.*

It is sometimes used in children's songs:

Pease porridge hot,

Pease porridge cold,

Pease porridge in the pot,

Nine days old.

Children will be encouraged to look at alliteration in poetry and stories. They may also come across it when discussing **persuasive writing in advertising**, for example:

- *Don't dream it. Drive it.*
- *You'll never put a better bit of butter on your knife.*

Alliteration makes writing sound punchy and memorable for the person reading it.

A good alliteration activity for children is to show them a sentence like the following:

Walter walked warily to the waterfront.

Teachers could encourage children to think of their own character, and then write a sentence similar to this one containing a verb, adverb and noun that all start with the same letter. This activity helps children to think about different word classes and is a fun way to encourage them to play with language, improving their writing skills.

What are assonance and consonance?

Assonance (or vowel rhyme) is the repetition of a vowel sound in a sentence to create an internal rhyme. The sound does not always have to be at the start of a word. For example:

The moon rose over an open field

proud round cloud

Consonance is the repetition of consonants in quick succession in a sentence:

grassy summer days

pitter patter

Alliteration may be taught in early Key Stage 2, but assonance and consonance would probably not be taught until Year 5 or Year 6 English.

Alliteration, assonance and consonance are effective tools in creating an effect and making writing more memorable.

She sells sea-shells on the sea-shore. The shells she sells are sea-shells, I'm sure. For if she sells sea-shells on the sea-shore. Then I'm sure she sells sea-shore shells.

Apostrophe

Children are first introduced to apostrophes in Year 2. Help them practise punctuating correctly at home with our simple revision tips, covering the use of apostrophes for possession and omission.

Apostrophes are punctuation marks. In English we use them in two ways, to show possession and to show contraction (or omission).

Apostrophes to show possession

Apostrophes are used to tell us that something belongs to someone. For example, if you were talking about a football belonging to Ben, you would say 'Ben's football'.

Ben's football (the football that belongs to Ben)

There is only one of Ben, so this is called **singular possession.**

the girl's hat Simon's car

In the example above ONE girl owns ONE hat and Simon owns ONE car.

When a singular proper noun ends in s, the national curriculum states that the suffix to use to indicate possession is 's (though other style guides often use the apostrophe only). In other words, according to the national curriculum it's Columbus's voyage, not Columbus' voyage.

James's coat the princess's toy

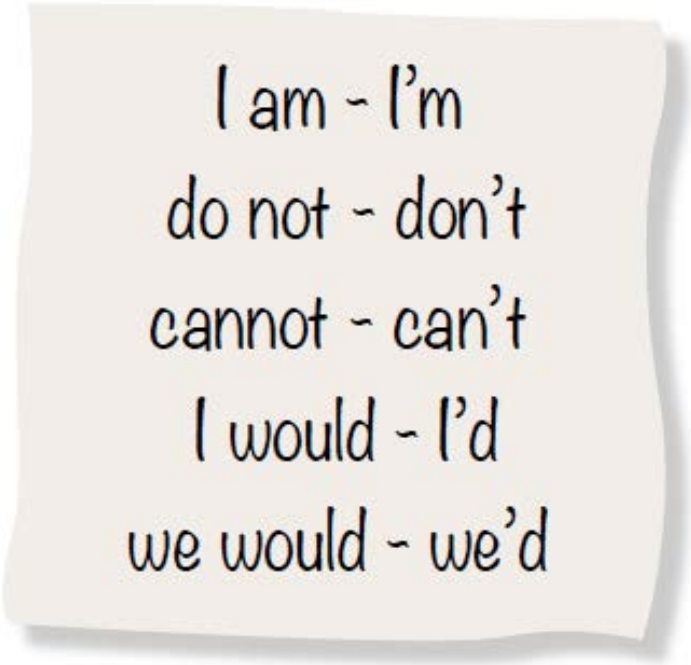
If there are **two or more people** owning something, an apostrophe is needed to show **plural possession.**

In this case **the apostrophe goes after the plural owners**, so if a group of girls each own a hat and you want to talk about all these hats, you'd say 'the girls' hats'.

the girls' hats the boys' car

Apostrophes to show contraction or omission

If we put two words together and miss out some letters, we need to add an apostrophe where the missing letters are. For example: ‘do not’ would change to ‘don’t’, the contracted form.



When do children learn about apostrophes in primary school?

Following the 2014 curriculum, children in **Year 2** are taught to use **apostrophes for singular possession.** They are also taught to use **apostrophes for contraction.**

There is no mention of apostrophes in the Year 3 curriculum, but teachers will ensure that this Year 2 objective is consolidated throughout Year 3.

In **Year 4**, children move onto using **apostrophes to show plural possession.**

Apostrophes are not mentioned in Year 5 and Year 6, but again teachers should continue to consolidate this topic throughout a child’s time at primary school.

Apostrophes in the primary-school classroom

Teaching methods will vary from teacher to teacher: some teachers may focus on showing children how to use apostrophes in targeted lessons, or they may simply

spend 5 or 10 minutes at the start of each lesson on punctuation. Teachers should also highlight pupils' misuse of apostrophes in their marking.

Methods for teaching apostrophes may include the following:

• Worksheets giving a list of different sentences, where children have to **add apostrophes in the correct place.**

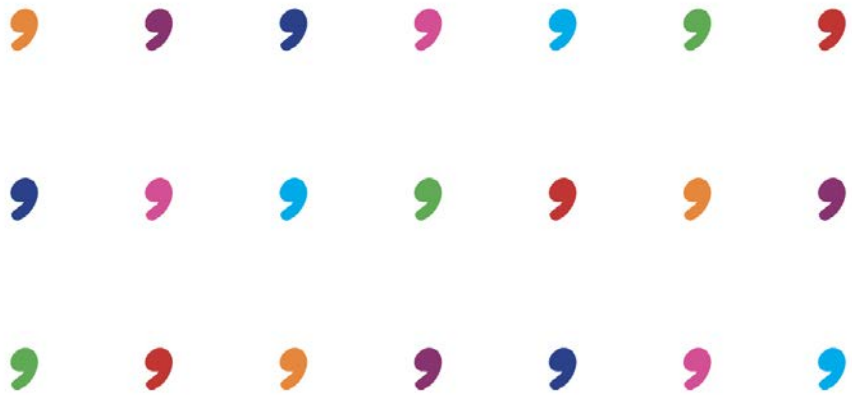
• **Matching cards**, for example 'I am' with 'I'm'. These are very good for helping to familiarise a child with the spellings and apostrophe placing of different words.

• Computer programmes and games where children are required to **move a virtual apostrophe** and put it in the correct place. These are very popular, as they usually give children immediate feedback on whether they have got something right or not.

• A teacher may dictate words or sentences to children containing apostrophes as a test to see if they are able to write the word or sentence, including putting the apostrophes in the correct place.

• Visual **classroom displays** that show children rules and examples regarding apostrophes.

• **Punctuation karate / kung fu**, where children are given a karate action (plus energetic vocal!) to go with a particular type of punctuation. They may be asked to spell out some letters and include the action that represents an apostrophe. This is an excellent activity that helps children to learn in a fun way through physical activity.



Articles

Definite (the) and indefinite (a, an) articles explained for primary school parents, with examples of how they will be taught in primary-school grammar lessons.

Articles are words which tell us whether a noun is general (any noun) or specific. There are three articles:

the (specific or definite)

a (general or indefinite)

an (general or indefinite when followed by a noun which begins with a vowel)

For example:

A cat walked into the room.

The **indefinite article 'a' (in red**) tells us that the person who wrote the sentence was seeing the cat for the first time.

In this sentence:

The cat walked into the room.

The **definite article 'the' (in red)** tells us that this was a cat that had been seen before, or was known by the person writing the sentence.

The definite article is referring to a specific noun, whereas the indefinite article is referring to something more general, for example:

Give me a book.

This means the person speaking wants any book, they are not referring to a specific one.

Give me the book.

In this sentence, the speaker wants a particular book.

Use of definite and indefinite articles in primary-school texts

Often, in a story, a person or thing will be introduced using the indefinite article and then afterwards will be referred to with the definite article. For example:

The children gasped! A witch was standing at the door. She was shaking her broom at them and shouting angrily. Josie started to panic. What if the witch was going to eat them?

Initially, 'a witch' is used because the witch has not been seen or introduced previously. After that, 'the witch' is used because she has already been mentioned and can therefore be referred to with the definite article.

How children are taught about articles in primary school

Articles are **determiners**, words which come at the beginning of the noun phrase and tell us whether the noun phrase is specific or general. According to the primary curriculum, revised in 2014, children should be taught correct grammatical terminology, so they will learn that articles are one of many different kinds of determiners.

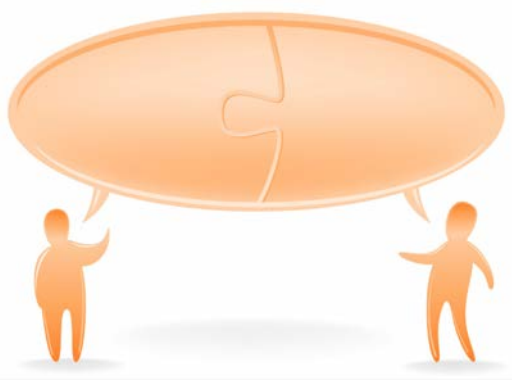
Argument text

Argument texts are studied and written in KS2 literacy. We explain the features to look out for in this non-fiction genre.

An argument text is a text written about a subject, where the writer is either 'for' or 'against' the subject. Common argument texts written in primary school highlight the pros and cons of subjects such as zoos, school uniform or the use of computer tablets in education.

Children study and write argument texts in Key Stage 2. They will read a range of them and get a feel for the way they are structured and the kind of language used.

Features of argument texts



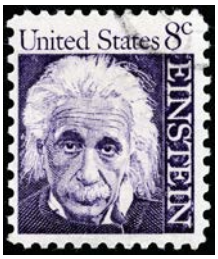
- They usually start with an introduction
- They are written in formal language
- Sophisticated connectives at the start of sentences and paragraphs give the writing a formal tone (In addition to this point... Furthermore... Another important fact is...)
- The writing is usually split up into paragraphs.
- Often the writer's viewpoint will be backed up by facts and research.
- The aim of the writing is to persuade the reader to consider the writer's point of view and perhaps sway them towards their opinion. Rhetorical questions may be used to help with this persuasion.

Once children have familiarised themselves with this genre, they will start drafting argument texts. It is important for them to find out plenty of facts about their topic, as good argument texts are backed up by robust research. Children will need to pay close attention to how they structure their text, including thinking about paragraphs and strong opening and closing sentences. They will then go through a process of editing their work with the help of teachers or peers. You'll find details of all the types of non-fiction texts studied in primary school in this eBook.

Biography and autobiography

In KS2 your child will learn about biographical and autobiographical texts. Find out about the features of these texts and help your child write their own.

A **biography is a text written about someone else's life** (usually someone famous). An **autobiography is a text written about one's own life.**



Children in Year 6 may be taught the unit: 'Biography and Autobiography' as suggested in the Primary Literacy Framework.

Features of biographical and autobiographical texts

If a teacher chooses to concentrate solely on biographies, children will start by reading a range of biographies, either about various different people or just about one person. They will look at the features of a biography, which include:

- Written in formal language
- Written in the past tense and usually written in chronological order (in time order)
- Text split up into paragraphs (usually each paragraph will detail the events of each part of the person's life, for example: one paragraph to explain their childhood, one to explain their early adulthood, etc.)
- Dates included so that the reader knows what happened and when
- Phrases such as: 'It is believed', 'It was thought', 'Many people claimed', 'There was a rumour that', etc. to show that history is based on stories that have been passed on over many years and some things cannot be stated as facts
- Pictures and captions

How do primary children study biographies?

Usually, children will be given photocopied texts to read and then they may be asked to text-mark the above features to show that they understand how a biography is set out and what is included.

Children may then be asked to choose a famous person that they are interested in. They will be asked to find as much information about this person and make notes on

them. Often teachers give children labelled **spider diagrams** to help them organise their information, but more able children may be asked to organise the information in their own way. An example of a spider diagram is below:

Children will then be asked to start **drafting their biography**, using the notes they have collected. Once they have done this, they will go through a **process of editing their writing**. Usually, a teacher will mark the first draft and write comments and suggestions on it to help them with this. Another method is for pairs of children to swap their work and then discuss with their partner how the writing could be improved.

Finally, children will write up their biographies in neat. They may plan how their finished piece is going to look, including title, pictures and captions. Children then produce their finished piece of writing, either on the computer or in their own handwriting.

Biography and autobiography are **non-fiction texts**. For more details on how non-fiction texts are taught in KS1 and KS2 see p138.

Blending

As they learn to read, children are taught individual sounds and then how to link them together to form words. By the end of Reception your child will be able to blend sounds together; find out how to support learning at home.

By the end of Reception, children should be able to make the correct sound for each letter of the alphabet.

Children will also learn to **blend sounds**. This means that they will learn to look at a short word, such as 'tin' and rather than saying three separate sounds, /t/ /i/ /n/, **link the sounds together and say the whole word in one go**. This is a big step for many children and can take time.

• Children will usually focus on blending CVC (consonant, vowel, consonant) words for some time. Examples of these are: mat, rip, cot, tip, sit, cut, ham, nod.

• They will then start to learn to blend consonant clusters such as fr, cl, st, br, lk, sm. Examples of words containing these are: frog, clap, stay, brim, milk, fast.

• Children will also need to start blending words that contain vowel digraphs. A vowel digraph is two vowels that make up one sound, such as /ai/, /ee/, /ue/, found in words such as fair, bee, glue.

• They will also learn to blend words using consonant digraphs. A consonant digraph is two consonants that make up one sound, such as /sh/, /ch/, /th/, found in words such as ship, chat and thin.

When a child gets stuck on a word, a teacher will often help them to read it by getting them to look at the individual sounds. For example: if a child gets stuck on the word:

sitting

a teacher may point at each individual sound and encourage the child to sound them out. Sometimes it is useful for a teacher to write the word on a mini-whiteboard in bigger letters, so that they can underline the individual sounds like this:

s i tt i ng

Once a child has identified all of the individual sounds, they are encouraged to blend the sounds together to read the whole word.

Book reports

Book reports are a homework staple, helping your child engage with their reading matter and improve their literacy skills. So what's involved, and how can you make them easier for your child?

A book report or review is your child's written critique of a book that they have read. Book reports tend to focus slightly more on describing what the book is about, while reviews are more concerned with your child's opinion on the book. Generally, book reports and reviews will include:

- The title and author
- An overview of the story: characters, plot, setting, etc
- What your child liked and didn't like about the book
- Whether they would recommend it, and to whom

What's the point of book reports?

In some schools, book reports or reviews are regular homework tasks; in others, children may only write them occasionally, for example at the end of a literacy unit focusing on a particular book. 'The main objective is for children to show their deeper understanding of a text, and also to demonstrate their reading preferences and think in more depth about the sorts of books they like reading,' says teacher and English consultant Charlotte Reed. Book reports also help teachers assess children's comprehension of their reading books, and ensure that books are read properly, not just skimmed over. And, of course, they help improve literacy skills such as spelling, grammar and vocabulary.

What sort of standard is expected?

Book reports tend to be more commonly assigned in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, and it goes without saying that they will become longer and more in depth as your child progresses through primary school. For example:

- In **Reception**, a book report might simply be a drawing inspired by the book,

perhaps with a simple sentence written underneath.

• In **Year 1**, your child might be given a printed template with spaces to fill in for the title, author and illustrator, and a couple of sentence starters such as: 'The main characters in this book are…' and 'I liked this book because…'

• In **Year 3**, your child might be asked to divide their book review up with subheadings such as plot, characters, setting, my opinion.

• In **Year 6**, your child might be required to review books independently, using varied sentence structures and vocabulary – so, saying the book was 'exciting' or 'thrilling' rather than just 'good'.

Helping your child to write a book report

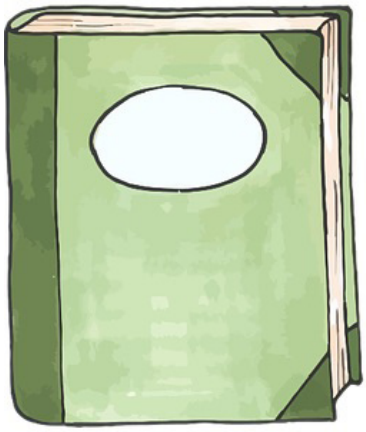
1. The first step when helping your child to write a book report is to make sure they've read and understood the book. Asking them questions to answer verbally before putting pencil to paper will help them clarify their thoughts on the book. If it's a longer book, encourage them to make notes as they're reading.

2. Use book review templates (you can download some from TheSchoolRun) as a basis for the report. Prompt your child by asking questions about the book ('What genre does this book fit into? Who would you recommend it to?'), or, for younger children, give them some sentence openers.

3. You could also make a set of cards with useful words (mystery, adventure, exciting, funny, sad, scary, etc) that they can use when writing reviews.

4. Another good tip is to read other children's book reviews on websites such as Reading Zone, Toppsta and Spaghetti Book Club to familiarise your child with the format of a book report, and help them consolidate their own opinions of the book.

Top tips for making book reports fun



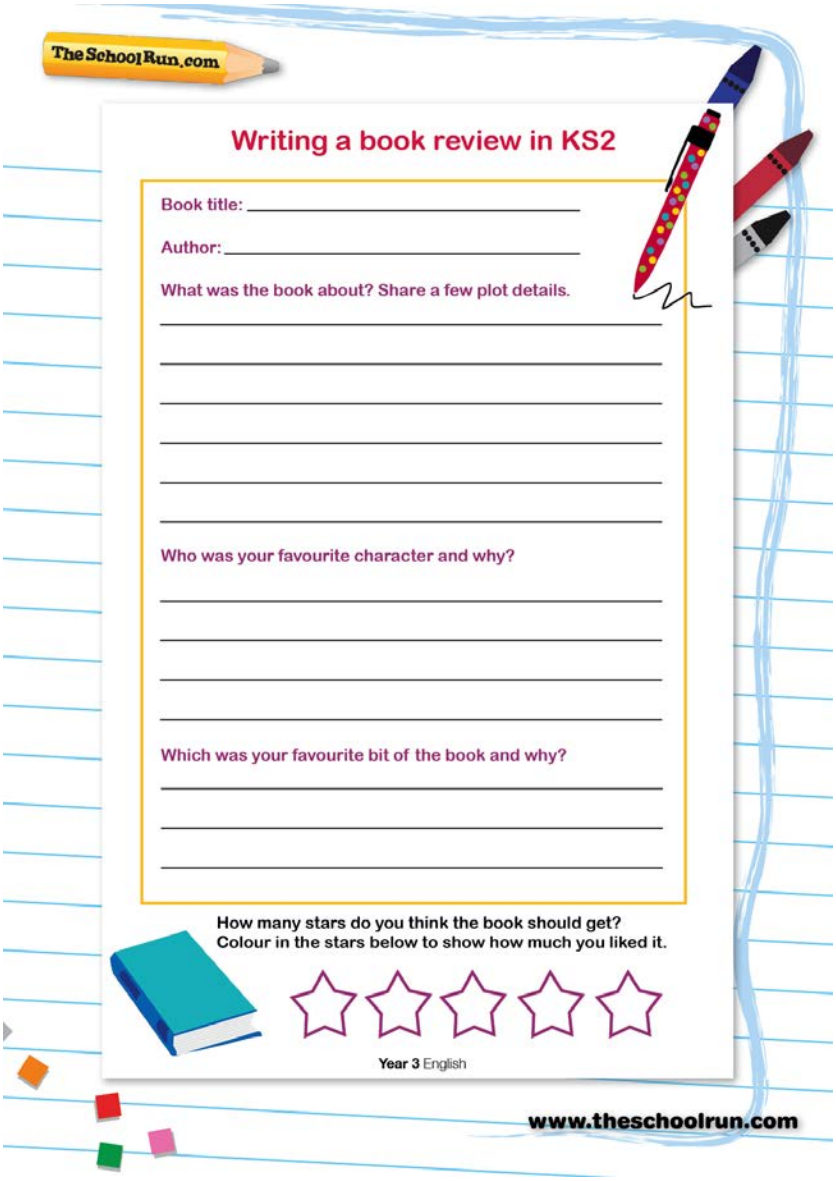
Unless your child's teacher has specified a format, there are lots of ways to make writing book reports more interesting.

'Your child could draw and annotate a picture of their favourite scene from the book, or write an emotional response from the viewpoint of one of

the characters,' Charlotte suggests. Other formats could include a newspaper report or an imagined interview with a character.

Another good way to make book reports fun is to write mini reviews on Post-It notes. 'Your child can then stick these inside book covers so they remember what they thought of them – or, in the case of library books, so other children can read them,' says Charlotte.

Encourage your child to share their book reviews online, too: 'It's good for them to see their own work on the internet, and helpful to other children, as well,' Charlotte adds. Children's review sites like Toppsta make it very easy to share reviews.



Writing a book review in KS2

Book title: _____

Author: _____

What was the book about? Share a few plot details.

Who was your favourite character and why?

Which was your favourite bit of the book and why?

How many stars do you think the book should get?
Colour in the stars below to show how much you liked it.

Year 3 English

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Brainstorming

Children learn how to brainstorm in school to generate ideas and solve problems. Find out how teachers encourage children to develop this skill and how it can help improve your child's written work.

Brainstorming is a process whereby a question or problem is posed, then a group of people give ideas which are noted by a scribe, who writes them down for the group.

This process can be used by adults during training sessions, but is also used by teachers, wanting to gather and share ideas from their class with a view to helping them produce a quality piece of writing.

For example: a teacher may want children to write a description of the troll in 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'. They may either have a blank whiteboard or flipchart ready to jot ideas down, or they may have prepared a frame to organise information as follows:

What does he look like?

What sounds does he make?

What does he say?

What does he smell like?

How does he feel?

What is his home like?

A teacher could go though each element in turn, asking children to talk to their partners about the different aspects of the troll. Ideas would be jotted down and the teacher might try to elicit more information from the children to extend their ideas. For example, a child may say that the troll feels angry. The teacher might try to draw their attention to physical feelings as well: 'He spends a lot of time sitting in water, how do you think that makes him feel?' They may also encourage children to add describing words to the words they have chosen, so if they say he roars, a teacher might say 'How does he roar?' to which the children may answer 'loudly', 'viciously' or 'stupidly'.

The follow-on activity from this might be to write a paragraph describing the troll, using the notes that have been gathered on the board.

Brainstorming is an excellent way of pooling ideas so that children are provided with a range of rich vocabulary to use in their writing.

Clauses

From Year 1 onwards children are taught to write sentences made up of two clauses as part of sentence-level literacy work in the classroom. We explain everything you need to know about main and subordinate clauses in parent-friendly language.

Clauses are the building blocks of English sentences, **groups of words that contain a subject and a verb.**

To understand clauses, it is a good idea to review the different components that make up a sentence.

Words are the **smallest units of meaning**, for example:

squirrel

Phrases are **small groups of words intended to convey meaning**, such as:

the fast, red squirrel

A **clause** is a **group of words that contain a subject** (the noun or pronoun about which something is being said, usually the doer of the action) and a verb (a doing word). An example of a clause is:

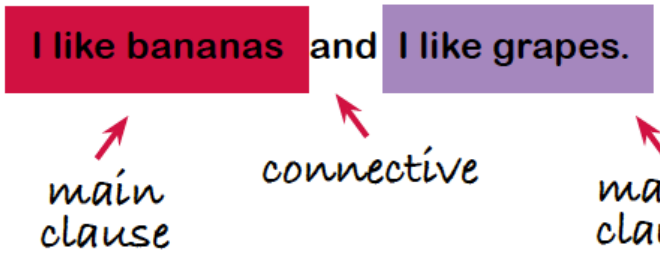
The fast, red squirrel darted up a tree.

The subject of this clause is the fast, red squirrel and the verb is 'darted'. This can also be called a simple sentence.

What is a main (or major) clause?

A main clause is a clause that contains a subject and an object. Main clauses make sense on their own.

I like bananas. is a **simple sentence** which is made up of a main clause.



This is a **compound sentence**: it is made up of two main clauses: *I like bananas* and *I like grapes*. The two main clauses are joined by the connective 'and'.

Sometimes a sentence is made up of two clauses: a main clause and a **subordinate (or dependent) clause**, which relies on the main clause.

What is a subordinate clause?

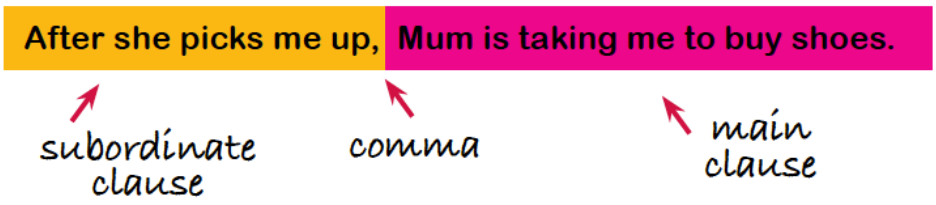
A **subordinate clause** contains a subject and a verb, but it needs to be attached to a main clause because it **cannot make sense on its own**. For example:

This is a **complex sentence (also referred to as a multi-clause sentence)**. It has a main clause (*I first saw her in Paris*) and a subordinate clause (*where I lived as a small child*), which relies on the main clause to make sense. The two clauses are joined by the connective 'where'.

Connectives that join clauses can be conjunctions, prepositions and adverbs.

Examples of subordinate clauses include **embedded clauses** and **relative clauses.**

Main clauses don't always have to come before subordinate clauses in sentences:



When do children learn about clauses?

In **Year 1**, children are expected to write sentences with two clauses joined by the word 'and'.

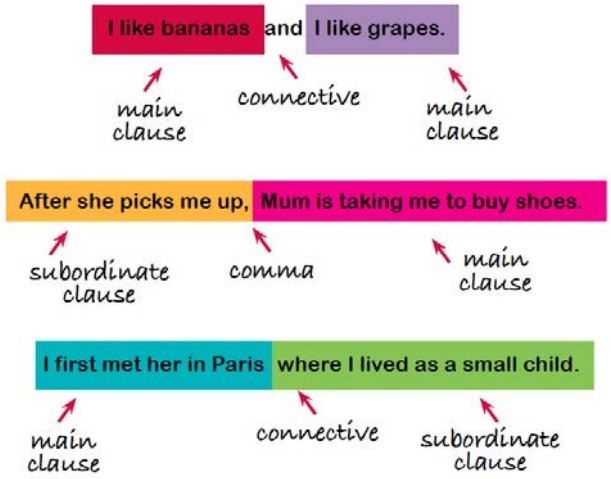
In **Year 2**, children start learning about subordination and coordination and need to start using a main clause and subordinate clause (a complex sentence), joined by 'when,' 'if,' 'that' or 'because.'

In **Years 3 to 6**, children are expected to continue to use a range of simple, compound and complex sentences, however their connectives need to become more sophisticated, for example: 'because,' 'although,' 'therefore,' 'meanwhile' and so on.

By **Year 6**, they need to be able to understand the following terms:

- connective
- clause
- main clause
- subordinate clause
- simple sentence
- compound sentence
- complex sentence / multi-clause sentence

They may be tested on these in the KS2 SATs Grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of Year 6.



Cohesive devices

As children start to develop their own writing style in primary school they will be asked to use 'cohesive devices' to improve their writing and help it flow. We explain what 'cohesion' means in fiction and non-fiction writing.

The term **'cohesive devices'** refers to the conjunctions, connectives and pronouns used to **link the parts of a piece of writing**. Using the same verb tense throughout a text also offers 'cohesion'.

Use of cohesive devices in primary-school writing

The 2014 primary curriculum states that children in Years 5 and 6 need to 'use a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs'.

Basically, when a person's writing has cohesion, an attempt has been made to link clauses, sentences and paragraphs so that the writing 'hangs together'.

This piece of writing shows how cohesive devices can be used:

When a person in Egypt died, their body was taken to be mummified immediately. It took 70 days to complete the process.

First, the brain was removed through the nostrils with a hook. Then a cut was made in the side of the body, through which the organs were removed. These were put into canopic jars decorated with the heads of gods. The heart was left in the body so that it could be weighed against a feather in the afterlife. The body was washed with wine and water mixed with spices. The inside of the body was filled with sweet-smelling herbs and sewn up.

Later, the body was dried out in a bath of natron, which was a kind of salt. After forty days, it would have dried out to look like leather. It was oiled, stuffed and wrapped carefully with bandages. Charms called amulets were placed in certain places in the bandages because Egyptians believed the body needed to be protected from evil spirits. Finally, a mask was put over the head.

The **time connectives** (in red: first, then, later, finally) are used to show that this is a process that has several steps and an end goal. These words are also adverbs, because they tell us when something is done.

Pronouns (in blue: these to refer to the organs and it to refer to the body) are used to show that the writer is referring back to a person or object already named.

Conjunctions (in green: and, so, because) are used within sentences to link ideas within a sentence.

Which cohesive devices are taught to children throughout primary school?

In **Year 1**, children will start to write sentences and will be encouraged to use the connective 'and' to join clauses, for example: *We went shopping and my mum bought lots of nice food.*

In **Year 2**, children are encouraged to write longer pieces of writing and will be shown that the verb tense should remain consistent throughout a text (always past tense or always present tense). They will begin to expand on their use of connectives to join clauses of sentences, using connectives such as: when, if, that, because, or, but.

In **Years 3 and 4**, children will be taught how to compose fiction and non-fiction texts and introduced to the use of paragraphs. They will be expected to use pronouns to link one sentence to a previous one. They will be encouraged to use a wide range of conjunctions (when, if, because, although). They will start to use fronted adverbials, which can help with cohesion when they are related to time (for example: first of all, after all the drama had unfolded, at the end of the meal, etc.)

The aim of the above teaching is to help children get to a point in **Year 5 and 6** where they can produce writing that shows a range of devices to aid cohesion.

Ways in which teachers teach cohesive devices:

- By reading texts and drawing attention to various features.

- Through marking children's work; for example, they may show a child how they could join two short sentences through the use of a conjunction, or they may point out where a tense should stay consistent.

- By teaching 'stand-alone' lessons where a child needs to do some sentence-level work on conjunctions, pronouns or adverbials. There may be lists up in the classroom to offer writing prompts.

- By encouraging children to read a piece of work they have written and improve it to make it more cohesive. Sometimes children are put into pairs to do this, so that one can act as a 'critical friend' to the other.

Colons

Understand how colons are introduced and taught in primary school.

A colon is a punctuation mark that can be **used to introduce a list** or to **separate two independent but linked clauses** (colons are used to stress that both clauses in the sentence are closely linked and the second clause emphasises, adds clarification, or adds further detail to the first clause).

It looks like two dots, one on top of the other:

A **clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb**, for example:

When **colons are used to introduce an item or series of items**, the first word written after the colon does not need to be capitalised.

Your child will need many items for their residential trip: a sun hat, trainers, pyjamas and a towel.

A colon can also be used to separate clauses within a sentence. The clause after the colon is used to:

- conclude the clause before it
- explain the clause before it and enhance its meaning.

For example:

A whale is not a fish: it is a warm-blooded mammal.
All the children agreed: chocolate was the best ice-cream flavour.

In some cases, **colons are also used to introduce a quotation or direct speech.** For example:

He offered the following advice: "Don't run too fast at the beginning of the long-distance race."

How are colons taught in primary school?

Children are taught to use **colons to introduce a list** first, then taught to use colons to punctuate clause boundaries.

Children will be introduced to types of writing that use colons for lists, such as recipes. Children will then be asked to identify the correct location to insert a colon, and then be expected to use them for lists in their writing. For example:

Common foods rationed during WW2 were as follows: bacon, cheese, milk and flour.

Colons used to separate independent clauses are taught in Key Stage 2.

Once children have consolidated their knowledge of sentence types and clauses, they will be introduced to colons and semi-colons used at clause boundaries. This will usually happen first through worksheets, in which they will have to insert a colon into the correct place within a sentence, before they start to use them in their writing.

When are colons taught in the primary-school classroom?

Children first start using colons to introduce lists in Year 3.

Colons to separate clauses are first introduced in Upper Key Stage 2, usually in Year 5 or Year 6, as they can be tricky to use. It can be difficult to determine when to use a colon and when to use a semi-colon at clause boundaries; semi-colons tend to

be used when the clauses are closely linked and continue on from one another, and when you could use a co-ordinating conjunction to link the clauses.

By the time children are assessed in KS2 SATs, they will be expected to be able to insert colons in the correct place within a sentence.

This is an example of a colon question they might be asked to answer in the Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test:

Tick one box to show the correct place for a **colon** in the sentence below.

I decided it was time to leave I needed to

avoid the evening traffic.

Children who leave primary school working at the expected standard for writing will be expected to make some use of colons accurately in their writing.

Children who are exceeding expectations or working at greater depth will need to provide evidence that they can use punctuation such as colons and semi-colons consistently and accurately to enhance the meaning and avoid confusion within a sentence.

Commas

Understand how commas are introduced to primary-school children with our guide to KS1 and KS2 grammar.

A comma is a punctuation mark that separates items in a list and marks the divisions within sentences.

How are commas used?

In the primary curriculum, children are taught that commas are used:

- to separate items in a list
- to indicate parenthesis within a sentence with an embedded clause
- to separate direct speech from a reporting clause
- to avoid ambiguity
- to separate main and subordinate clauses.

Commas have lots more uses, including their use within numbers, but our focus is on the most common uses within the primary curriculum.

Commas are used to separate items in a list. They are also **used to separate adjectives that qualify the same noun** (long, sharp claws). For example:

Tom's favourite fruits are bananas, blueberries, strawberries and kiwis.

The dragon had long, sharp claws.

Commas can also be used as an alternative to brackets to show parenthesis or additional information within a sentence as an **embedded clause**.

A hot dog, a type of sausage, is often served in a long bread bun.

Phoebe stopped running, as she realised she wouldn't manage to catch the bus.

Before he opened his eyes, Sam could hear the thundering waves.

Commas are also used **when punctuating direct speech, before quotation marks when the quotation is introduced.** For example;

As mum left she called out, "I'm off to the shops!"

Crucially, **commas are used to avoid confusion in writing**. For example:

Let's eat Grandma!

Let's eat, Grandma!

The first sentence suggests that we should eat Grandma, poor lady! The second makes it clear that the writer is telling their grandmother that it is time to eat.

How are commas taught in primary school?

Once they are familiar with the look of commas, and can identify them in the books they are reading, children will be expected to place them accurately.

This usually occurs first with the use of worksheets, then in structured writing sessions with the aim of producing multiple sentences that require commas.

When it comes to teaching the use of commas to avoid ambiguity, word play and experimentation are often the best way for children to see the importance of the comma within their writing.

When are commas taught in the primary classroom?

In Key Stage 1, most teachers wait until Year 2 to introduce commas for items in a list. This is because using commas to separate adjectives describing the same noun is also taught in **Year 2** and teachers feel it is more beneficial to the children to teach these skills at the same time as they both involve listing words.

In lower KS2, commas will be introduced to separate fronted adverbials from the main sentences, often in Year 3.

Usually in **Year 3**, but sometimes **Year 4**, children will be taught to punctuate direct speech using a comma. (This is when they are first taught to use inverted commas for speech.)

In upper Key Stage 2, using commas for parenthesis is taught, most often in **Year 5**.

In **Year 5 or 6**, children are taught to use commas to clarify meaning and avoid ambiguity.

Children will be assessed on their understanding of comma use in both KS1 and KS2. This is an example of a Year 2 Punctuation, Spelling and Grammar paper question:

Put a comma in the correct place in the following sentence:

My mum bought eggs milk and cheese at the shop.

Children will also be required to use commas correctly when they are completing independent writing projects.

Comparatives and superlatives

We use the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs to compare things, people, actions and states in our writing. Find out how your child is introduced to this concept, how they will learn to form the comparative and superlative and how they will practise using them in the primary-school classroom.

Adjectives and adverbs have three different forms: the positive, the **comparative** and the **superlative.**

Adjectives

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
green	greener	greenest
tall	taller	tallest
good	better	best
joyful	more joyful	most joyful

Adverbs

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
fast	faster	fastest
joyfully	more joyfully	most joyfully
well	better	best
far	further	furthest

The **comparative form is used to compare** one person, thing, action or state to another:

My brother is smaller than me.
That bag of rice is heavier than the other.
The library is quieter than our home.
Roses are prettier than daisies.

The **superlative form is used to compare one thing to all the others in the same category**; in other words, when the comparison is taken to the highest degree possible, for example:

This bead is the smallest.
My rucksack is the heaviest.
This road is the quietest.
My bouquet is the prettiest.

The comparative and superlative are formed differently depending on the word's positive form.

- Usually we add the suffixes -er and -est: warm / warmer / warmest
- When the adjective ends in e we drop it and add -er and -est: large / larger / largest
- Adjectives that end in one consonant double it before adding -er and -est: red / redder / reddest
- Adjectives ending in -y change it to i and add -er and -est: juicy / juicier / juiciest
- Adverbs ending in -ly usually add the words 'more' (comparative form) and 'most' (superlative form): slow / more slowly / most slowly; lazily / more lazily / most lazily
- Some adjectives use 'more' for the comparative form and 'most' for the superlative: famous / more famous / most famous
- Some comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs are irregular: bad / worse / worst; much / more / most; well / better / best

Primary-school grammar: comparative and superlative

Children in **Year 1** are taught how to use comparatives and superlatives (without being told that this is what they are called). They are taught that certain adjectives can have the endings (**suffixes**) -er and -est added to them to make new words.

Later in Key Stage 2, children will be taught how to add these endings to words ending in -y, for example: heavy / heavier / heaviest; happy / happier / happiest; nutty / nuttier / nuttiest. (The rule here is that you remove the -y and then add -ier or -iest.)

The correct term for the endings -er and -est is suffix (suffixes are groups of letters added to the end of a word). **Children in Years 5 and 6 learn about various different suffixes and prefixes and how to add them to root words.**

Are children tested on their understanding of comparatives / superlatives?

Children will probably not be specifically asked about comparatives and superlatives, but they may be asked to add a suffix to a root word. For example, for the word juicy:

Possible answers are juicier, juiciest, juiciness or juicily, so the answer does not have to be a comparative (juicier) or a superlative (juiciest).

At-home practice to help with comparatives and superlatives

• Ask your child to go on a word hunt. Get them to look in books and magazines all over the house and then write down any comparatives and superlatives they find (help them prepare two headed columns on a large piece of paper first).

• Give your child three superlatives to put into their own sentence. For example, if you suggested calmest, earliest and fastest, they could make the sentence: *He was the calmest student in the class, who always arrived earliest and finished his work fastest.*

• Give your child some sentence starters containing comparatives for them to finish. For example: *The window is bigger than....* (your child could finish with 'the kettle') or *The oven is hotter than....* (your child could finish with 'the fridge').

comparative superlative comparative
superlative comparative superlative
comparative superlative comparative
superlative comparative superlative
comparative superlative comparative
superlative comparative superlative

Contracted words

Contracted words or contractions are used every day in spoken and written English. Help your child keep them straight with our parents' guide, including complete listings of the common contractions children learn to spell in Year 2 and throughout Key Stage 2.

Contracted words, also known as **contractions** (the term used in the 2014 revised national curriculum) are **short words made by putting two words together.** Letters are omitted in the contraction and replaced by an apostrophe. The apostrophe shows where the letters would be if the words were written in full. **Examples of contracted words** are do not (don't), he is (he's), they are (they're), did not (didn't), could not (couldn't), it is (it's).

Contractions are used a lot in everyday speech, so **children will be familiar with these words but may not know where they come from** and that the grammatical terminology we use to describe them is 'contracted'.

Contractions can be used in speech and informal writing such as writing notes or writing to friends and family, but should be avoided for formal writing where the original two words should be used (for example, do not rather than don't).

When are contractions taught in primary school?

Contractions are formally taught in **Year 2** as part of children's spelling work / lessons.

How are contracted words taught in KS1 and KS2?

The teacher will introduce the term and discuss when and how they are used. The teacher will model using the contractions in writing and model identifying contractions in texts when reading. The children may be given activities to complete, such as:

- Matching the two original words to the contraction
- Playing ICT games to match the original words to the contraction
- Sorting the contractions according to the missing / omitted letters
- Identifying and highlighting contractions in texts

Children are often given contracted words as spelling lists to learn at home or as part of their homework.

3 steps to using contracted words correctly

1. Remember **the apostrophe is used in place of a letter(s).**

2. Be careful not to confuse the use of an apostrophe for a contraction with apostrophes for possession.

3. Try using both the two-word and contracted versions of the words when talking to your child to help them to learn what the contractions mean, for example using both ‘do not’ and ‘don’t’ during discussions.

Common contracted words in English list

	BE	WILL	WOULD	HAVE	HAD
I	I’m	I’ll	I’d	I’ve	I’d
	I am	*I will*	*I would*	*I have*	*I had*
YOU	you’re	you’ll	you’d	you’ve	you’d
	you are	*you will*	*you would*	*you have*	*you had*
HE	he’s	he’ll	he’d	he’s	he’d
	he is	*he will*	*he would*	*he has*	*he had*
SHE	she’s	she’ll	she’d	she’s	she’d
	she is	*she will*	*she would*	*she has*	*she had*
IT	it’s	it’ll	it’d	it’s	it’d
	it is	*it will*	*it would*	*it has*	*it had*
WE	we’re	we’ll	we’d	we’ve	we’d
	we are	*we will*	*we would*	*we have*	*we had*

THEY	they're	they'll	they'd	they've	they'd
	they are	*they will*	*they would*	*they have*	*they had*
THAT	that's	that'll	that'd	that's	that'd
	that is	*that will*	*that would*	*that has*	*that had*
WHO	who's	who'll	who'd	who's	who'd
	who is	*who will*	*who would*	*who has*	*who had*
WHAT	what's / what're	what'll	what'd	what's	what'd
	what is / what are	*what will*	*what would*	*what has*	*what had*
WHERE	where's	where'll	where'd	where's	where'd
	where is	*where will*	*where would*	*where has*	*where had*
WHEN	when's	when'll	when'd	when's	when'd
	when is	*when will*	*when would*	*when has*	*when had*
WHY	why's	why'll	why'd	why's	why'd
	why is	*why will*	*why would*	*why has*	*why had*
HOW	how's	how'll	how'd	how's	how'd
	how is	*how will*	*how would*	*how has*	*how had*

English contracted words (negating a verb) list

is not / isn't, **are / aren't**, was not / wasn't, **were not/ weren't,** have not / haven't

has not / hasn't, had not / hadn't, **will not / won't**, would not / wouldn't

do not / don't, **does not / doesn't,** did not / didn't, **cannot / can't**

could not / couldn't, should not / shouldn't, **might not/ mightn't,** must not / mustn't

Contracted words: common mistakes to look out for

Children often write ‘of’ instead of the contracted form of ‘have’, ‘ve’ (so “I could of” instead of “I could’ve”).

It’s is the contracted form of it is. Its isn’t the same thing – it’s a possessive pronoun meaning “of it”.

The contraction they’re is a homophone (it sounds just like the words their and there, but has a different meaning).

do not don’t could not couldn’t
he is he’s we are we’re it is it’s
I will I’ll you are you’re
they are they’re we will we’ll
cannot can’t did not didn’t
has not hasn’t is not isn’t

Creative writing

Children are encouraged to read and write a range of genres in their time at primary school. Each year they will focus on various narrative, non-fiction and poetry units; we explain how story-writing lessons help develop their story structure, grammar and punctuation skills.

Narrative or creative writing will be developed throughout a child's time at primary school. This table gives a rough idea of how story structure, sentence structure, description and punctuation are developed through story-writing lessons at school. (Please note: expectations will vary from school to school. This table is intended as an approximate guide.)

Creative writing in primary school

	Story structure	Sentence structure	Description	Punctuation
Year 1	Events in a story in an order that makes sense.	Joining two clauses in a sentence with the word 'and'.	Simple adjectives to describe people and places.	Use of capitals, full stops, exclamation marks and question marks.
Year 2	Stories sequenced with time-related words such as: then, later, afterwards, next.	Starting to use sentences with two clauses connected by 'and,' 'but,' 'so', 'when,' 'if' and 'then.' Keeping the tense of the writing consistent.	Using a broader range of adjectives.	Using capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas for lists and apostrophes for contracted forms and the possessive.

Year 3	Stories sequenced with time-related words: 'then', 'later', 'next'.	Continuing to use sentences with two parts, linked with connectives such as 'because', 'but' and 'so'.	Broad range of adjectives plus some powerful verbs.	Using all of the punctuation above. Starting to use some speech punctuation.
Year 4	Gaining confidence with structuring a story and with organising paragraphs.	Using sentences connected with more sophisticated connectives such as 'because', 'however', 'meanwhile' and 'although.'	Using a range of adjectives, powerful verbs and adverbs. Some use of similes. Using fronted adverbials (placing the adverb at the start of the sentence).	Increasingly accurate use of speech punctuation. Using commas after fronted adverbials.
Year 5	Good structure of description of settings, characters and atmosphere. Integrating dialogue to advance the action. Using time connectives to help the piece of writing to come together.	Using a range of connectives to connect parts of sentences.	Using adjectives, powerful verbs and adverbs. Possibly some use of figurative language such as metaphors, similes and personification.	Using brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis.

Year 6	Continuing to structure stories confidently. Using adverbials such as: 'in contrast', 'on the other hand', 'as a consequence'.	Using more sophisticated connectives like 'although', 'meanwhile' and 'therefore'. Using the passive form. Using the subjunctive.	Continuing to use a range of descriptive language (see above) confidently.	Using all of the previously mentioned punctuation correctly. Using semi-colons, colons and dashes to mark the boundary between clauses.

When teachers teach creative writing, they usually follow the **units suggested by the literacy framework**, including the following:

- stories with familiar settings
- stories from other cultures
- fairy tales (also known as traditional tales)
- fantasy stories
- myths and legends
- adventure and mystery
- stories with historical settings.

Teachers will start with a text that they are confident will engage the interest of the class. It is often a good idea to find a well-illustrated text to bring the story alive further. They will spend a week or two 'loitering on the text', which will involve tasks where characters and scenarios from the text are explored in-depth. These tasks may include:

- Drawing a story map or mountain to get an idea of the structure of the story
- Writing a letter from one character to another
- In pairs, improvising a conversation between two characters in the story

- Making notes on a spider diagram about a particular character
- Writing the thoughts of a character at a particular point in the story
- Writing a diary entry as one character in the story

Once teachers feel that the text has been thoroughly explored, they will guide the children in **writing their own version of the story**. This involves planning the story, brainstorming characters and setting and then writing a draft of the story.

Children will then be encouraged to edit and re-write their draft. Teachers may mark the draft and write their own suggestions on it, or they may ask children to swap their writing with their partner and encourage them to make suggestions on each other's work. Throughout this process, teachers are aiming to encourage children to develop skills in the above four sections of the table: story structure, sentence structure, description and punctuation.

Finally, children will write up a 'neat' finished version of their writing. Teachers often give children a format for doing this, such as bordered paper on which they can add illustrations, or a booklet for which they can design a front cover.

CVC, CCVC and CVCC words

Phonics teaching introduces children to CVC words (consonant vowel consonant), then CCVC words (consonant consonant vowel consonant) and CVCC words (consonant vowel consonant consonant). Understand how teachers will present the different words in the classroom and how to support your child's learning at home in our parents' guide to decoding and blending sounds.

A CVC word is a word that is made up of a **consonant, vowel and consonant sound.**

Cat, hot, tip, man and hut are all CVC words.

cat
trap
fast
man
grip

What are CCVC words?

Consonant, consonant, vowel, consonant words, for example: trap, chop, stun, grit, shop.

What are CVCC words?

Examples of CVCC **(consonant, vowel, consonant, consonant)** words are: hunt, fast, cart, milk, want.

Consonant digraphs and vowel digraphs in phonics

Children learn letter sounds in Reception, then start to 'blend' sounds to read words.

As a first step children focus on decoding (reading) three-letter words arranged consonant, vowel, consonant **(CVC words)**. They will learn other letter sounds, such as the consonants g, b, d, h and the remaining vowels e, o, u. A child who already knows all their letter sounds might be shown the CVC word 'pit' and asked to read it out loud. This is the point where they are required to use their knowledge of the individual sounds of each letter and blend these letter sounds together, so they are saying the whole word and not three individual sounds.

CVC words don't have to be three-letter words, as the C, the V and the C refer to consonant and vowel sounds (which could be made up of more than one letter) rather than to individual letters of the alphabet.

Once children have learnt to read a variety of CVC words, they move onto reading **digraphs (two letters that make up one sound)**. They will learn the sounds /ch/ and /sh/ and be shown how to represent these sounds as letters. They will also learn how to blend consonants; for example, they may be shown the two letters 'sp' and asked to say the sounds (/s/ and /p/) these letters make out loud.

Children then move onto reading **CCVC words**, such as chat, ship, frog, snap.

Once they have mastered these, they will move onto **CVCC words**, such as bash, card, send, mast.

Alongside this essential work on reading, they will be taught to form all their letters with a pencil on lines. The better they get at **decoding** (reading a written word out loud) the better they should get at **encoding** (spelling a spoken word on paper).

Phonics information for parents

For more information on phonics and how it's used to teach children to read, look through our parents' guides on TheSchoolRun.com, or find phonics worksheets and phonics games for your child to help them practise early reading at home.

CVC CCVC CVCC
CVCC CVC CCVC
CVC CCVC CVCC
CVCC CVC CCVC

Dashes

Understand how dashes are taught in the primary grammar curriculum with our guide.

A dash is a versatile punctuation mark that can be used within a sentence (instead of brackets or a colon) to show parenthesis. A dash mustn't be confused with a hyphen, which is used to combine words together and is slightly shorter in length than a dash.

How are dashes used?

Dashes can be used as an alternative to other punctuation marks to

- insert a break in a sentence to replace brackets, a colon or a semi-colon
- to extend a sentence and expand upon a previously-made point or clause
- to show subordinate or additional information within a sentence.

Here are **dashes used to add information to the previous clause:**

I book the holiday – he has all the fun.
The new car had finally arrived – and she decided she no longer wanted it.
Mrs Brown demands one thing from her pupils – attention.

Here a **dash is used in place of brackets:**

You are a friend – my best friend – and I'd like you to be my Maid of Honour.
Just then, Tom – my second cousin – got home from work.
Your results will depend – as my gran used to say – on how much effort you put in.

Along with its use in place of brackets and colons, a dash can be **used when writing dialogue, for example to show that someone speaking has been interrupted.**

"Mum, can I have some more choco–"
"No! You'll ruin your dinner," Mum replied.

Dashes can also be used to show repetition of a word or phrase for effect, and to separate repetitive phrases. For example:

"It can't – it can't be – not – a dragon!"
she screamed.

How are dashes taught in the primary school classroom?

As with all new or unfamiliar punctuation, it is important for children to see dashes 'in action' in the books they are reading. For example, adventure or horror narratives are full of dashes!

Most teachers will introduce dashes first through the eyes of a reader, then a writer. They might ask children to explain why dashes are used, or what effect their use has on the reader. Children will then progress to incorporating them into their own writing.

When are dashes taught in primary school?

Dashes are taught in upper Key Stage 2, most commonly Year 6, however some teachers may decide to teach their class dashes in Year 5 if they feel the class or a particular student is ready.

If taught in Year 5, children will most likely be expected to use dashes as an alternative to brackets. In Year 6, more emphasis will be placed upon using dashes in a more versatile way, to show repetition or interruption within speech.

Knowledge of dashes could also form part of the Key Stage 2 English Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test that takes place when a child is in Year 6. Children may be asked a question like the example below:

Tick one box to show where a **dash** should go in the sentence below.

The cheetah is the fastest mammal on earth ☐ it can reach speeds of ☐ 68 to 75 miles per hour. ☐

While there is no specific expectation for children to be able to use dashes to achieve age-related expectations, it is a requirement for greater-depth writing.

Decoding

From the first years of school your child will learn to decode written words and say them aloud. Find out how teachers teach decoding and how you can support learning at home.

The cat sat on the mat.

Decoding is the process of seeing written words on a page and being able to say them out loud.

Decoding is concerned with sounds (phonemes), rather than the understanding of meaning. Sometimes teachers will comment that a child is good at decoding, but has poor comprehension. This means that they can read aloud very fluently, but have trouble understanding what they have read.

How children are taught to decode words

• Children will learn their **letter sounds in Reception**. This means knowing what sound to make when you see a letter written down.

• They will then progress to seeing **CVC (consonant, vowel, consonant) words**, which they need to read out loud, such as cat, log or Sam.

• Children will move onto decoding words with **consonant clusters**, such as st, tr, cr, sk, sm, etc. They will need plenty of practice in doing this and may need to see plenty of words with the same consonant cluster before they can decode them confidently. For example: a teacher may concentrate on the consonant cluster tr for a few days, so will give children various activities to do involving words containing this consonant cluster, such as tram, trap, trip, trim.

• Teachers then move onto teaching children how to decode **vowel digraphs**. A vowel digraph is two vowels placed together that make one sound, for example: /ai/, /oo/, /ea/, /ee/, etc. Again, teachers may concentrate on one digraph, for example: /ai/ and give children various activities involving words with this digraph, such as: rain, train, pail, snail.

• Teachers also need to teach children to decode **consonant digraphs**. This is two consonants that are placed together to make one sound, such as: /ch/, /sh/, /th/.

• Reading specially-tailored phonics stories that concentrate on one particular sound at a time. For example: a story that has lots of words containing /ch/ in it.

• Guided reading sessions where children read aloud to the teacher and they help children with sounding out words they are stuck on.

• Worksheets where several sentences are given, each with one word missing. Children need to cut out the words from a box at the bottom and put them in the correct place. These worksheets would usually deal with one sound at a time, so if the sound is /oo/ the words that need cutting out and placing might be 'boot', 'food', 'mood', 'foot'.

• Matching picture and word cards.

• Activities on the computer that involve choosing certain phonemes to make a whole word.

• Giving children cut-up cards with the following sounds on them and asking them to make words out of them:

f r b

n t s

ai oo ea

Learning to read: your child's year-by-year progress

By the end of Reception, children should be able to decode words with consonant clusters and digraphs.

In **Year 1**, children will start to learn more about the complexity of different letter strings and their sounds. For example, they will learn that the letter 'g' sounds different in 'great' than it does in 'gel'. They will also learn that one sound can be spelt in various different ways. For example: all these words contain the same vowel sound: blame, rain, say, however that sound is represented by different letters in each word.

Children in **Years 1 and 2** need to be attempting to decode two- and three-syllable words. A two-syllable word they might come across is: *playing*

Here they would need to apply their knowledge of phonics and sound out the word, then blend the sounds together. Teachers often help children to decode, by splitting up or underlining each individual sound: p l ay i n g

In **Years 2 and 3**, children will be decoding three-syllable words such as:

computer animal telephone reporter

Again, when children struggle with these words during a guided reading session, a teacher will usually encourage them to sound them out. Teachers may also encourage children to use the picture alongside the text to help them. Another good strategy is to encourage a child to look at the whole sentence and then work out what the missing word is. In this way, a teacher is encouraging a child to use comprehension to help with decoding.

Once children are confident with phonics, teachers can spend guided reading sessions concentrating solely on the comprehension of a text. It is expected that by Key Stage 2 children are confident enough with phonics to not need further support, however this is rarely the case with a whole class, and often children need extra phonics support throughout their time at primary school.

Teachers will also encourage children to learn to spell high frequency words. High frequency words are words that appear very often in written texts. Here are some examples of high frequency words found at each stages of primary school:

Reception:

me, you, of, and, man, can, had

Years 1 and 2:

could, them, with, after, much, what, their, friend, house

Years 3 and 4:

everyone, couldn't, suddenly, laughed, really

Often children will be given lists of high frequency words to take home and learn. This way they are becoming more and more familiar with these words so that they will be able to read them when they come across them in the various texts they read.

Determiner

Determiners (a, the, many, one, my, their) identify nouns and are taught as part of the Y5 and Y6 grammar curriculum. We explain what primary-school parents need to know.

A determiner is a word that goes before a noun and identifies the noun in further detail. There are different types of determiners:

articles	a boy, an orange, the cat
demonstratives	this apple, that car, these shops, those girls
possessives	his hat, her homework, my book, their house
quantifiers	some rice, each word, every box
numbers	one chair, two men, three dogs
question words	which bag, what letter, whose computer

What are children taught about determiners at primary school?

Children will probably only be introduced to determiners in **Y5 or 6**. This teaching will most likely be in preparation for their Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test in Y6.

How are determiners tested in KS2?

The Year 6 SPAG test may feature a question similar to the following:

> **Underline all the determiners in the sentence below.**
>
> She put two bowls of milk down for the cats.

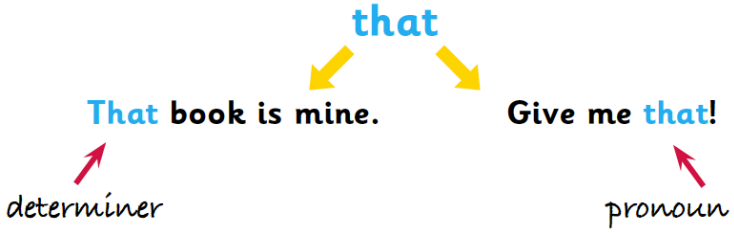
Answer: *She put two bowls of milk down for the cats.*

> **Insert articles into the spaces below.**
>
> I went to _____ shop to get ___ pint of milk. I got 25p change from _____ one pound coin I gave them.

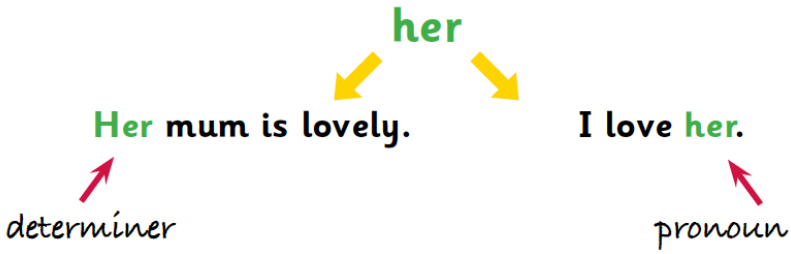
Answer: *I went to a / the shop to get a pint of milk. I got 25p change from the one pound coin I gave them.*

Definite and indefinite articles (a, an, the) are a type of determiner; grammar questions in the KS2 grammar test may only refer to articles and not to determiners in general.

It's also easy to get confused by words that sometimes act as determiners and sometimes as pronouns within a sentence. For example:



In the first sentence the word 'that' is a determiner ('that book'). In the second it is a pronoun, as it replaces a noun. And again in the following sentences:



How are children taught about determiners in the classroom?

- Teachers may set worksheets with sentences similar to those above, asking children to pick out the determiners.

- They may set children a task to look through their reading books and pick out all the determiners.

- The class may participate in a discussion about which words are determiners; for example, a child may be given the phrase 'happy girl' and suggest that the word 'happy' is a determiner. Class discussion could then lead to the teacher explaining that 'happy' is in fact an adjective.

- The teacher may set grammar challenges, such as writing a sentence containing five determiners, then asking the children to swap their work with a learning partner to circle the determiners.

- Teachers may give children a short passage with all the determiners missing, then ask them to fill in the gaps with appropriate determiners of their own.

Digraphs

Your child will be taught about digraphs as part of their phonics learning journey. We explain how teachers explain the concept to children and how you can help your child spot digraphs at home.

A digraph is two letters that make one sound. The digraph can be made up of vowels or consonants.

Consonant digraphs are taught in **Reception**. There is then a whole range of vowel digraphs that are taught in **Year 1.**

Consonant digraphs

Consonant digraphs are groups of two consonants that make a single sound. Examples of consonant digraphs are:

ch as in chat

sh as in ship

th as in thick

wh as in what

ph as in phone

ck as in sock

Vowel digraphs

These are groups of two letters – at least one of which is a vowel – that make a single sound, for example, the letters ow in the word 'slow.'

When teachers teach phonics, they tend to look at one sound and then show children the various ways this can be made and written down as a grapheme (a combination of letters).

For example: true, food, crew all have the same /oo/ sound, represented by a different digraph (underlined) each time.

Day, rain and they also all contain the same sound (/ai/), but are represented by a different digraph each time.

Teachers will also teach children about the split digraph. This is where a digraph, such as ae, ie, oe, ee, ue is 'split' by a consonant, for example:

- In the word pie, you have a digraph made up of ie.
- In the word pine, the digraph has been split by the letter n to make a new word, 'pine'.

Split digraphs are represented like this: a_e, i_e, o_e, e_e, u_e.

Teachers may give children a group of words and then ask them to put them into groups according to the spelling of a certain sound, for example, they may give them the following word cards:

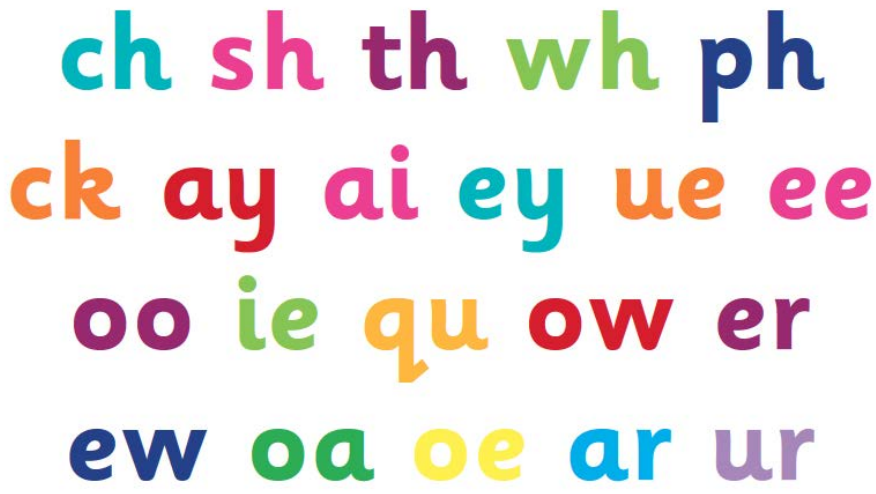
fair mare bear care tear

lair stair dare hair pear

and ask them to arrange them into the following groups according to the way their digraphs are spelled:

ai a_e ea

Teachers will tend to point out various digraphs to children as they read books. They may be given word cards to put into groups, according to their digraphs. They will also be given phonics activities that encourage them to write words containing certain digraphs. It is very important for children to be given the chance to practise writing words in order to learn the correct spelling.



Direct and indirect speech

From Year 3 onwards your child will learn to write direct speech (quoting exact words spoken) and indirect speech (reporting a conversation). Our parents' guide covers the use of speech marks and how your child will cover this area of punctuation in the classroom.

Direct speech is a sentence in which **the exact words spoken are reproduced in speech marks** (also known as quotation marks or inverted commas). For example:

"You'll never guess what I've just seen!" said Sam, excitedly.

"What's that?" asked Louise.

"Our teacher has a broomstick and a black pointy hat in the back of her car. Maybe she's a witch!"

"No, silly! They're for the school play!" replied Louise, sighing.

What is indirect speech?

Indirect speech is when the general points of what someone has said are reported, without actually writing the speech out in full. It is sometimes called reported speech. For example:

Sam was excited to see a broomstick and a black pointy hat in the back of his teacher's car. He told his friend Louise about this and that he thought their teacher might be a witch. Louise had to point out that the things in their teacher's car were for the school play.

When do children learn about direct speech?

Teachers will start to teach children how to set out direct speech in **Year 3**.

The **general rules of direct speech** are:

- Each new character's speech starts on a new line.
- Speech is opened with speech marks.
- Each line of speech starts with a capital.

- The line of speech ends with a comma, exclamation mark or question mark.
- A reporting clause is used at the end (said Jane, shouted Paul, replied Mum).
- A full stop goes after the reporting clause.
- If the direct speech in the sentence is broken up by information about who is speaking, add in a comma or question mark or exclamation mark to end the first piece of speech and a full stop or another comma before the second piece (before the speech marks), for example:

"It's lovely," she sighed, "but I can't afford it right now."

"I agree!" said Kate. "Let's go!"

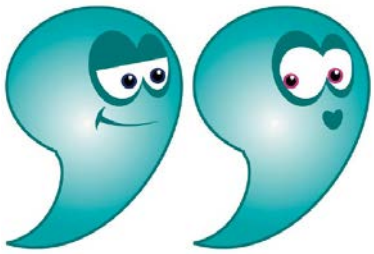
When do children learn about indirect speech?

In Y5, children may be taught a literacy unit that guides them in writing a newspaper article including the use of indirect (or reported) speech. In Y6, children may be encouraged to use indirect speech when writing a biography.

When changing direct speech into indirect speech, changes have to be made to a sentence. For example:

- Verb tenses usually shift back a tense (into the past)
- Word order often needs to change
- Pronouns often need to change
- Words indicating place and time need to change

By Year 6 children should be setting out speech and punctuating it correctly in their stories. In fiction, indirect speech can sometimes be helpful if a character in a story wants to recount a conversation they have had in the past.



DUMTUMs

Find out what a DUMTUM is and how this technique will help your child to set out their work correctly.

Teachers often have a particular way that they prefer children to set out their work.

DUMTUMs are a way of reminding children how to present their work.
The letters stand for:

Date

Underline

Miss a line

Title

Underline

Miss a line

Start

DUMTUM
DUMTUM
DUMTUM
DUMTUM

This is a good way to get children into the habit of presenting their work well. Often children will 'bunch up' their writing or spread it out too much. If they have this rule to follow they are being made aware of how to present neatly and consistently, which will hopefully become a habit.

Some teachers have these instructions on a poster next to the board, so that children are constantly reminded of how to set out their work.

Often, schools will make sure that all their teachers follow the same method for teaching children how to present their work, therefore expectations for presentation of work are kept consistent throughout a child's time at primary school and children will get into the habit of doing this from an early age.

Ellipsis

An ellipsis (sometimes referred to as dot dot dot...) is a punctuation mark we use to indicate that words are missing. We explain how the ellipsis is introduced in primary school in our guide for parents.

An ellipsis highlights the omission of a word or phrase within a sentence. It is **a series of three consecutive dots that indicates the writer has deliberately missed out a word, sentence, or whole section from a text**, without altering its original meaning.

How is an ellipsis used?

The ellipsis punctuation mark is three consecutive dots used to demonstrate:

- A pause for effect to increase tension
- An unfinished thought, or one where some meaning is implied and not spelled out
- A trail off into silence
- A word or words have been missed out from a text deliberately

For example:

Slowly, we crept on into the dark cave...

He carefully opened the container and discovered... loads of coins!

"Do you think you're ready? I just don't know if I..." stammered Tom.

The review states: "I enjoyed the film immensely ... it's perfect family fare."

How is ellipsis taught in the primary-school classroom?

As with most new punctuation, the best way to familiarise children with ellipsis is with examples from books, newspapers and other everyday texts, in which they will be able to see the punctuation used accurately and in context. Once children can identify ellipsis they will be taught to write sentences that incorporate this punctuation mark.

Mystery, thriller, horror and suspense writing genres lend themselves to the use of ellipses for dramatic effect and to create tension within the writing. In many schools children refer to ellipsis at the 'de, da, daaaaah!' (drum roll / fanfare!) piece of punctuation!

After children have been taught how to use ellipses for dramatic effect, they will practise using ellipsis to show that words have been omitted from a sentence and to show an unfinished thought. Incorporating the ellipsis into direct speech is a tactic often used by teachers, as it is a concept children grasp more easily.

When is ellipsis taught?

Ellipsis is taught in Years 5 and 6, but more commonly in Year 6.

Children working at the expected standard for writing by the end of Key Stage 2 will be making some successful use of ellipses within their independent writing to help their writing flow and avoid repetition. Some children will be using ellipsis for dramatic effect by the end of Year 6.

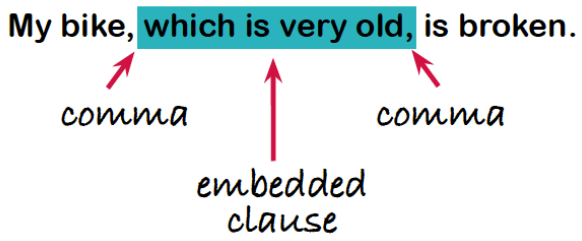
Embedded clauses

Understand and use embedded clauses with confidence with our plain-English parents' guide, including examples and details of how this aspect of sentence construction is taught in Key Stage 2 grammar.

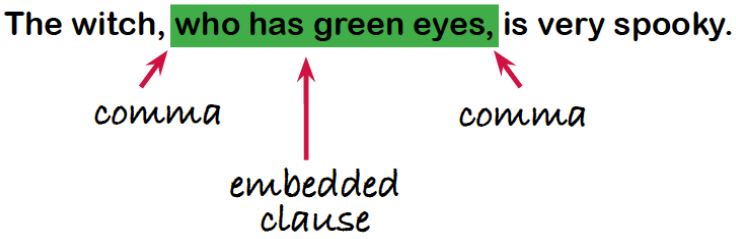
An **embedded clause is a clause used in the middle of another clause.**

In other words, an embedded clause is a clause (a group of words that includes a subject and a verb) that is within a main clause, usually marked by commas.

Information related to the sentence topic is put into the middle of the sentence to give the reader more information and enhance the sentence.



Commas are usually (but not always) used to separate the clause that has been embedded from the main clause.



If you removed the embedded clause the main clause would stand alone as a complete sentence. However the embedded clause is reliant on **the main clause so it does not make sense on its own** (it's a subordinate clause). For example:

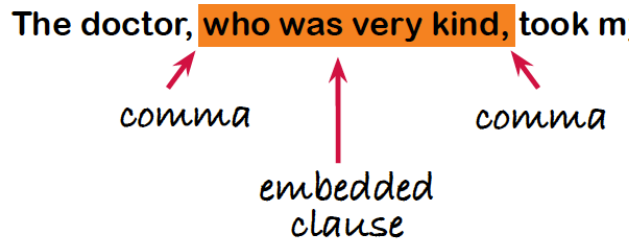
The coat, which was old, had a hole in the pocket.

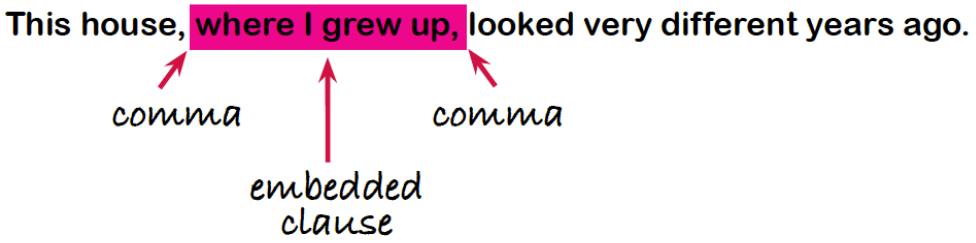
The main clause makes sense on its own: *The coat had a hole in the pocket.*

The embedded clause doesn't make sense on its own: *which was old*

The embedded clause has to be supported and explained by the main clause in order to make sense.

An embedded clause **usually begins using the words which, who or where** and relates to the noun or pronoun in the main clause.





When are embedded clauses taught in primary school?

In **Year 2** children will be taught to use the term 'clause'.

By **Year 3 and 4** children are expected to **begin extending the range of their sentences by using more than one clause in their writing.** It is most likely that teachers will introduce the idea of an embedded clause to add information into children's writing at this stage.

In **Year 5 and 6** children should be confidently using a range of sentence types with more than one clause in their writing.

How will embedded clauses be taught in the classroom?

The national curriculum, which was revised in 2014, states that children should be explicitly taught grammatical terminology. Therefore, teachers will introduce the concept using the terms 'clause' and 'embedded clause'.

The children will be shown examples and the teacher will model how to write and use

embedded clauses correctly to the whole class or small groups. The children may be given grammar activities to complete independently or in small groups such as:

- Identifying and highlighting examples of embedded clauses in a text or sentence.
- Adding given embedded clauses to simple sentences.
- Adding their own embedded clauses to simple sentences.
- Chopping up and manipulating sentences written on pieces of card.
- Writing their own embedded clauses when completing pieces of extended writing.
- Identifying or adding embedded clauses when editing their own pieces of extended writing.

Use embedded clauses correctly by:

1. Using commas to embed a clause in a sentence.
2. Adding information that links with the topic of the sentence.
3. Start the clause with which, who or where.

embedded clause embedded clause embedded clause
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Encoding

Find out how your child will learn to encode – hear a sound and write it down – and what you can do at home to support learning.

Encoding is the process of hearing a sound and being able to write a symbol to represent that sound.

Decoding is the opposite: it involves seeing a written symbol and being able to say what sound it represents.

For example, if a child hears the sound /t/ and then writes the letter 't', this means they are able to encode this sound.

How children are taught to encode sounds

By the end of Reception, children are expected to be able to write each letter of the alphabet and know what sound each one represents. They are also expected to be able to write one grapheme (written symbol) for each of the 44 phonemes (individual sounds).

s sat	t tap	p pan	n nose	m mat	a ant	e egg	i ink	o otter
g goat	d dog	c k click	r run	h hat	u up	ai rain	ee knee	igh light
b bus	f farm	l lolly	j jam	v van	oa boat	oo cook	oo boot	ar star
w wish	x axe	y yell	z zap	qu quill	or fork	ur burn	ow now	oi boil
ch chin	sh ship	th think	th the	ng sing	ear near	air stair	ure sure	er writer

Encoding also involves hearing a whole word and then being able to write the whole word with the correct spelling.

• In Reception, children will learn the letter sounds and then start to put them together to make **CVC words** (consonant, vowel, consonant) such as hot, nip, ten, etc.

• They will then move onto reading words with **consonant clusters** (two consonants placed together) such as st, tr, cr, pl, sk, lk.

• They then move onto reading words with **vowel digraphs** (two vowels placed together that make one sound) such as /ai/, /oo/, /ee/, /ue/ and **consonant digraphs** (two consonants placed together that make one sound) such as /th/, /ch/ and /sh/.

While they are learning to decode these words, they will also need to learn to encode them (write the words with the correct spelling). Teachers will use various activities to help them with this:

• Writing words with their fingers in the sand tray. This helps children to get an idea of how the letters are put together to make a word.

• Fill-the-gap worksheets, where children have to read sentences with missing words and work out which words (given in a list or box) go in the gaps. They then need to write the words in the gaps, copying from the list. Usually these worksheets will concentrate on one particular sound at a time, so if the sound was /ch/ the words might be ‘chat’, ‘chin’, ‘choose’ and ‘chain’.

• Giving weekly spelling lists for children to practise at home. Teachers may encourage children to use the ‘Look Cover Write Check’ strategy, whereby they look at a word, cover it over, write the word from memory, then uncover it and check if they have got it right. They may also give children activities to do at school to support their learning of these spellings, such as testing each other in pairs, writing words on a mini-whiteboard.

Exception words

As your child learns to read you might hear them talk about the 'exception words' they are learning. We explain what exception words are, what role they play in phonics learning and how you can support your child's developing reading and spelling skills at home.

Exception words are words in which the English spelling code works in an unusual or uncommon way. They are not words for which phonics 'doesn't work', but they may be exceptions to spelling rules, or words which use a particular combination of letters to represent sound patterns in a rare or unique way.

Some exception words are used very frequently, which is why children are introduced to them very early on in their phonics learning (in Reception, alongside high frequency words, and in Key Stage 1).

How are common exception words taught in Y1 and Y2?

English has a complex spelling system in which the same letter (or letters) can be used to represent different sounds and the same sound can be represented by different letters.

As children learn to read within a structured phonics method all these different phoneme (spoken unit of sound) and grapheme (the written symbol that represents a sound) correspondences are explained, and **the 2014 English curriculum has set out the various spelling rules (and exception words) that need to be learnt by children in each year of their primary education.**

Examples of exception rules are:

Year 1 Children learn that the /s/ sound after a short vowel is usually represented by 'ss', however 'bus' is an exception to this.

The word 'school' has a 'ch' in it but makes a sound like /k/; it is therefore an exception word as it does not follow the phonics rules children will have been taught until then.

Year 2 When you add the suffix -ing / -er /-ed to a root word, if that word has a short vowel and one consonant, the consonant needs to be doubled (for example, pat becomes patting). An exception to this is words ending in x: mix - mixing, box - boxer.

The word ‘sugar’ is an exception word because it starts with an ‘s’ but is pronounced ‘sh’. Other examples of exception words are:

Year 1: the, a, do, to, today, of, said, says, are, were, was, is, his, has, I, you, your, they, be, he, me, she, we, no, go, so, by, my, here, there, where, love, come, some, one, once, ask, friend, school, put, push, pull, full, house, our – and/or other words, depending on the phonics learning programme used in your child’s school

Year 2: door, floor, poor, because, find, kind, mind, behind, child, children*, wild, climb, most, only, both, old, cold, gold, hold, told, every, everybody, even, great, break, steak, pretty, beautiful, after, fast, last, past, father, class, grass, pass, plant, path, bath, hour, move, prove, improve, sure, sugar, eye, could, should, would, who, whole, any, many, clothes, busy, people, water, again, half, money, Mr, Mrs, parents, Christmas – and/or other words, depending on the phonics learning programme used in your child’s school

How are children taught exception words?

The number and order of exception words your child will be taught will vary according to the phonics programme being used in their school. Also, some English words are exceptions in some regional accents but not in others.

In the classroom **practical strategies will often be used to introduce children to specific groups of exception words.**

• Teachers might give children a task where they would need to add endings to various words (for example, they might give them the words pat, mix, sit, tut, clap, box and ask them to add the suffix -ing to these words; children would need to remember the rule that if the root word has a short vowel then the consonant after it needs to be doubled before adding ing, unless the word ends in an x, in which case just -ing is added).

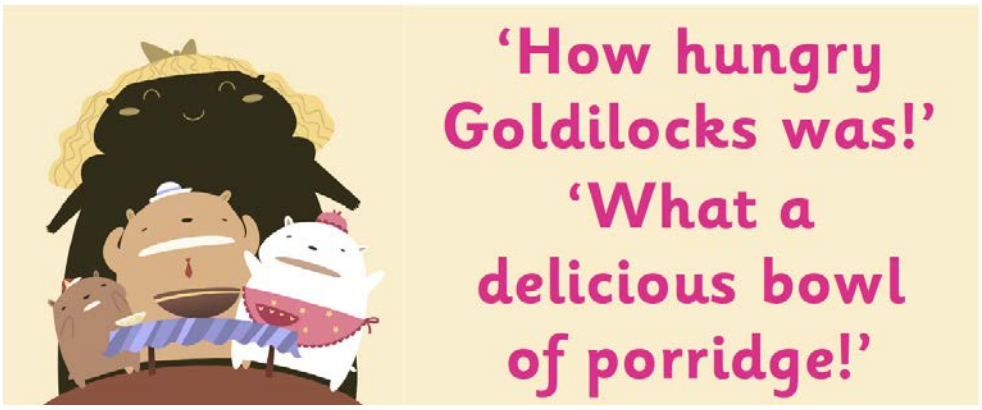
• Teachers might give children alternative strategies for spelling exception words; for example, ‘because’ and ‘beautiful’ are exception words because they do not follow the usual phonics rules. Teachers might use mnemonics (memory techniques) to help children with this. For example, to remember the correct spelling of the word ‘because’ children might be encouraged to remember the mnemonic ‘Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants’ (each first letter of this sentence makes up the letters of the word ‘because’). For ‘beautiful’ they might be given the mnemonic ‘big elephants always understand tiny insects’.

Exclamation marks

Understand how to punctuate exclamation sentences and how to communicate sudden and strong emotion by using exclamation marks.

An **exclamation mark** is a punctuation mark which looks like a straight line with a dot underneath it. It is **used to show that an exclamation, an interjection or a statement sentence has finished.**

An **exclamation sentence** starts with 'What' or 'How' and ends with an exclamation mark. For example:



For the purposes of the primary curriculum, children in KS1 are taught to punctuate exclamation sentences using an exclamation mark at the end, and will be expected to demonstrate this knowledge in the KS1 SATs grammar paper at the end of Y2.

As children progress through school, they will be encouraged to punctuate some statements and interjections with exclamation marks as well. **Exclamation marks are used at the end of statements when a strong emotion is being expressed (good and bad – surprise, excitement or delight, but also anger, fear or shock)**, and tell a reader to add emphasis to a sentence.

They might also suggest that a speaker is shouting. For example:

Our team just won the Premiership!

I love Disney films!

Wow! Oh! Stop! Yuck! Hooray! Help! Ouch!

What is an interjection?

An **interjection** is a word on its own, or used as part of a sentence, that expresses sudden emotion such as surprise, joy or enthusiasm. Interjections are usually used at the beginning of a sentence, and when used on their own can be a sentence in their own right (see above).

When are exclamation marks taught in the primary classroom?

Exclamation marks in their most basic form (at the end of exclamation sentences) are taught first in Year 1, at the same time as children are taught the difference between 'yelling' 'telling' and 'asking' in writing. Children will be taught to demarcate an exclamation sentence that starts in 'How' or 'What' with an exclamation mark.

Further emphasis is placed on exclamation marks again in Year 2, when children will be expected to identify exclamation sentences for the KS1 SATs, and be able to punctuate them accurately along with commands and questions. Here is an example of a SATs-style exclamation mark question:

Which sentence uses an **exclamation mark** correctly?

Tick **one.**

Where are you going!	☐
I cleaned the bathroom!	☐
What an enormous cake we saw!	☐
My name is Laura!	☐

Throughout the rest of their time at primary school, children's knowledge of exclamation marks will be reinforced (from Year 3 onwards they will be using exclamation marks in direct speech punctuation).

Children will again be tested on their ability to demarcate questions, exclamations and statements accurately in the KS2 SATs Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar test.

It is not an explicit requirement for children to be able to write exclamation sentences or use exclamation marks within their writing to reach age-related standards, however most teachers will expect to see them used accurately in children's writing once they reach upper Key Stage 2.

How are exclamation marks taught?

During Year 1, exclamation marks will usually be taught through drama and reading aloud.

From Year 2, children will be expected to understand exclamation sentences and use exclamation marks in their written work. The use and identification of exclamation marks is usually part of the grammar objectives of an English lesson.

Exclamation sentences

Understand the primary curriculum definition of an exclamation sentence with our parents' guide to primary-school grammar.

Sentences can be statements, commands, questions or exclamations.

An exclamation is forceful statement which expresses high levels of emotion or excitement.

For the purposes of the primary curriculum, **exclamations always begin with 'what' or 'how'** and **are usually punctuated by an exclamation mark (!).**

An easy way to think of exclamation sentences is to think of fairy tales. For example, Little Red Riding Hood might speak in exclamations like these:

Examples of exclamation sentences are:

How exciting this holiday has been!
What a beautiful day!
What a lovely dress you are wearing!

What is the difference between an exclamation and an exclamation mark?

Using an exclamation mark for punctuation doesn't change every sentence into an exclamation.

An exclamation mark is a punctuation mark that can end statements and commands as well as exclamations. Exclamation marks can also be placed after a phrase or single word (an interjection like *Hey!*). Exclamation marks are used to show that the writer wants to communicate strong emotion.

When are exclamations taught?

Teaching exclamation sentences starts during Key Stage 1. Children will be taught the difference between a statement, a question, a command and an exclamation, and how to punctuate them.

- A statement ends in a full stop
- A question ends in a question mark
- An exclamation ends in an exclamation mark
- A command ends in a full stop or an exclamation mark.

In **Year 1**, children are taught the difference between 'yelling, telling and questioning' (or exclamations, statements and questions).

In **Year 2**, the year in which children sit their KS1 SATs, the correct use of exclamations and exclamation marks is reinforced. An example of the type of question about exclamations children might be asked during Year 2 SATs is:

Tick the sentence that is an exclamation:

	Tick **one.**
Where are you going?	☐
Pick that up off the floor.	☐
What an enormous cake we saw!	☐
My name is Laura.	☐

In later year groups, children will learn to use exclamation sentences in their writing.

In Year 3, they might practise writing exclamations as part of direct speech (this is a progression from simply using full stops within speech).

By the end of KS2, children in Year 6 might be tested on exclamations during their Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation paper in SATs. For example:

Draw a line to match each sentence to its correct **function**.
Use each function box only **once**.

I hope the weather will be fine this weekend.	question
What is the weather forecast for the weekend	command
Check the weather forecast before you leave	statement
What amazing weather we had last week	exclamation

How are exclamations taught?

In Year 1, when they are first taught exclamations, children will complete verbal activities, such as role-play and acting out short scenes from books, in which the teacher might ask if the sentence is telling us something, asking us something or if a character is shouting it or perhaps showing lots of emotion. This will be followed by worksheets, usually identifying whether a sentence is 'yelling, telling or asking'.

In Year 2 there will be more time spent focusing on identifying what type of punctuation a sentence requires to show that it has ended, with some children attempting to show that a character is 'yelling' or showing emotion by using an exclamation mark. Speech marks wouldn't be required at this point as the use of speech marks is a Year 3 grammar objective.

The definition of an "exclamation sentence" as a sentence which must start with either "how" or "what" and include a verb is very specific to the primary-school grammar curriculum.

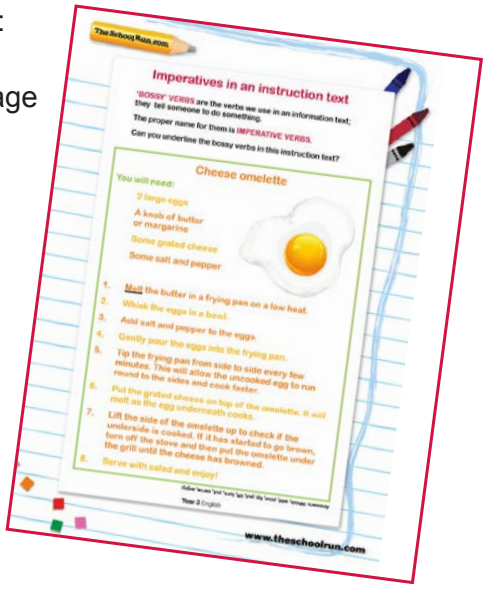
Explanation text

An explanation text is a specific type of writing and includes some identifiable features. Find out how your child's teacher will teach explanation texts and what your child needs to include in their own explanation texts.

An explanation text is a non-fiction text which describes a process, for example: the water cycle, how bees make honey or how a car is made.

Explanation texts: features

Explanation texts usually include these features:



- **Written in the present tense**, in formal language
- Text arranged into numbered points
- Sub-headings to separate sections of text
- **Time connectives,** such as first, then, next, later, finally
- Glossary to explain technical vocabulary
- **Diagrams** with labels
- Pictures with **captions**
- **Technical vocabulary** (sometimes in bold), for example: if the text is about how a car is made, it may include words such as 'ignition', 'engine' and 'bonnet'

How are explanation texts covered in primary school?

When starting a unit on explanation texts, a teacher will usually **give the class a range of explanation texts to read.**

They will discuss the above features and highlight them. They may decide which text they prefer and be asked to give reasons for why they think it is better, for example: shorter sentences make it easier to understand, eye-catching pictures, better layout, etc. The point of these exercises it to get children familiar with the kind of language used in explanation texts and also show them how these texts are set out.

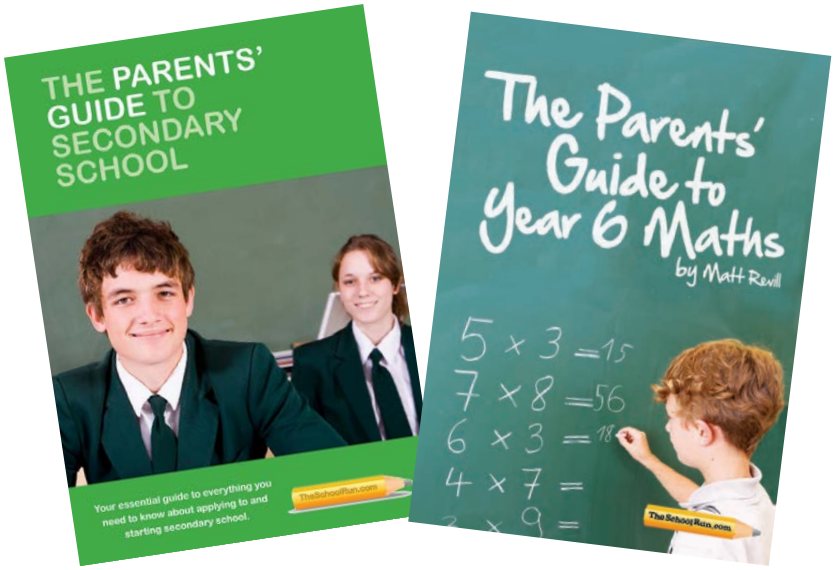
The next step may be for children to be given a process to focus on.

Often, a teacher will choose something that is in keeping with the topic being studied that term, or this writing may coincide with a design and technology project or a science experiment. For example: children may be asked to research how William Morris produced his prints, or how a musical instrument is made, or how pollination occurs. It is always helpful if children can have a real-life experience to support their learning, so a school trip to a museum or some kind of outdoor activity ensures that they are more engaged in this task and it is more meaningful to them.

Teachers often ask children to carry out verbal activities before they start writing, so they may ask the children to **explain verbally** what goes on in the particular process they are focusing on. This could take the form of a pair of children pretending to be television presenters, explaining the process to the whole class.

Children will then be asked to write the **first draft of their explanation text**, paying attention to the above features. There will then be a process of re-drafting where teachers will either mark the work themselves, adding comments to help improve it, or encourage the children to pair up and provide each other with guidance on how to improve each other's work.

When children come to write up their work in neat, they will also need to concentrate on layout and making their text as eye-catching as possible. They may be given the opportunity to use a computer to print off pictures and words with interesting fonts, or they may produce the whole text using a computer.



Extended writing

At school your child will be expected to produce pieces of extended writing, which is a writing task completed independently. Find out how teachers will help your child develop this skill and how you can support their learning at home.

Extended writing is when **children are given a set amount of time to produce a piece of writing without any help from an adult**. Usually, the extended writing session will mark the end of a unit of literacy teaching.

For example: teachers may spend three or four weeks working with the children on play scripts. They may start by reading and performing play scripts, then will practise writing speech out using play-script conventions, then start to draft their own scenes and perform them. At the end of the unit, they will be expected to produce their own play-script in the extended writing session, showing what they have learnt over the past few weeks.

Extended writing in the classroom

Extended writing is sometimes referred to as 'The Big Write'. Some schools still practise The Big Write, which consists of a session prior to writing when teachers carry out activities to encourage children to use VCOP (Vocabulary, Connectives, Openings and Punctuation):

Vocabulary: Encouraging children to use good descriptive vocabulary (adjectives in Key Stage 1, moving onto powerful verbs and adverbs in Key Stage 2).

Connectives: Children will practise putting connectives into their writing. In Key Stage 1 these will include: but, so, and, then, because. In Key Stage 2 these will include: therefore, meanwhile, furthermore, consequently, whenever.

Openings: Children will be encouraged to open their sentences in a variety of different ways, for example: using a connective such as 'Eventually', an adverb such as 'Warily' or an -ing word, such as 'Whistling'.

Punctuation: In KS1, children will need to remember full stops and capitals. In lower KS2, children need to start using exclamation marks and question marks. In upper KS2, children need to use correct speech punctuation, apostrophes and commas.

Children are then given about 10 minutes to plan their piece of writing. In **Key Stage 1** they will be given about **30 minutes to complete their writing task** and in **Key Stage 2** they are given about **45 minutes.**

Writing should be done independently and without the children talking. Some teachers play music quietly in the background. The idea is that children are given the space and time to really concentrate on their writing and apply all the skills they have been learning.

Writing assessments: how teachers mark extended writing tasks

Pieces of writing produced in extended writing sessions are very important for teachers to use when assessing the children's writing skills. They will look to see if children are including the elements taught and also where they could improve.

Some schools have a **system for giving feedback.**

One of these is 'a star and a wish'; for example:

- *Well done for using great description! You have used plenty of adverbs here.*

Have a look at where I have underlined your speech punctuation. Can you see what you need to add?

Some schools may have a system where they highlight positive elements in a child's writing in one colour (for example: Pink = think) and then bits that need improving in another colour (for example: Green = Go!).

Children will then be given back their marked piece of work and asked to improve it. They will either do this individually, or they may swap books with a partner and help each other edit their work.

Fables

Fables tell us a story and teach us a lesson at the same time and we've been hearing them, retelling them and writing them for over two thousand years. We explain how primary-school children learn about fables and Aesop in our guide.

A fable is a story that features animals, plants or forces of nature which are anthropomorphised (given human qualities). A fable always ends with a 'moral'. This is the lesson that is intended to be learnt through reading the story.

One of the most famous fables is The Hare and the Tortoise. In this fable, both animals are anthropomorphised in that they can speak and are competing against each other in a race. The arrogant hare stops to sleep halfway through the race because he is convinced he has enough time to do this and then rejoin the race and win it. Meanwhile, the slow but determined tortoise keeps going and wins while the hare is asleep.

Most of our best-known fables are thought to have been written by a man called Aesop, who is believed to have been a slave in Ancient Greece around 550BC.

How do traditional tales and fables differ?

A traditional tale is a story that has been told and re-told for many years, also known as a fairy tale (for example, Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood).

Fables in primary school

If children are introduced to fables at primary school, it is most likely to be in KS2.

They would start by reading a range of fables to give them a feel for the genre. They might then carry out a variety of activities, such as writing a diary entry as a character in a fable, acting out the fable in a group and re-telling the story verbally to a partner or in front of the class. Children would then write their own fable (either their own version of a fable they have read, or entirely their own creation), paying attention to the conventions of fable writing (anthropomorphised animals, a moral, etc.)

Fables at home: how you can help your child

You can help your child at home by **reading fables with them and encouraging them to talk about what they have read.** Free Aesop fables to listen to are available on the Storynory website.

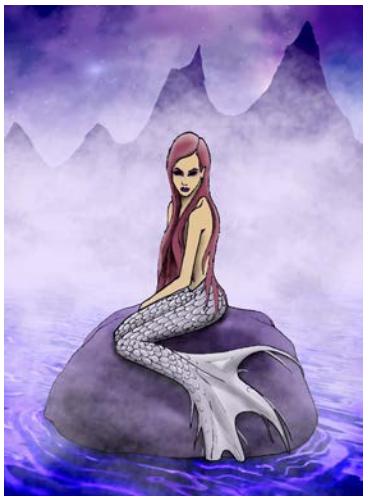
The charity Send a Cow has produced a free **collection of African fables**, including Why the Warthog is on his knees (Zulu) and How the Desert came to be (Ghana). Go to https://sendacow.org/get-involved/organisation/schools/lesson-resources/

Ask them plenty of questions about the characters to help them with reading comprehension, including questions where retrieval of information is required ('Who else was running in the race?') as well as questions that rely on inference ('Can you find a sentence that tells us that the hare was over-confident?') and also questions that rely on deduction ('What do you think the tortoise was thinking as he was doing the race?').

Aesopfables.com is an enormous and comprehensive online collection of 655+ fables, indexed in table format, with morals listed. The resource is free to use.

Also recommended is *The Orchard Book of Aesop's Fables* (£12.99, Orchard Books), a new retelling from Michael Morpurgo, with illustrations by Emma Chichester Clark. The best-known stories (The Hare and the Tortoise, The Lion and the Mouse, The Fox and the Crow) are included in the collection, perfect for KS1 children.

Figurative language



Figurative language uses words and ideas to suggest meaning and create mental images. We explain how children are taught to recognise and use figurative language in KS2 English, with definitions and examples of simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole and onomatopoeia.

Language can be literal (obvious, plainly stated, communicates exactly what is meant) and figurative (suggests and infers meaning, rather than simply stating it).

Literal language is a feature of non-fiction texts; figurative language is more commonly used in fiction and poetry.

Figurative language uses figures of speech to give a text more richness and depth, often comparing things to create an image in the reader's mind.

Figurative language in primary school

There are many different forms of figurative language; in Key Stage 2 English your child is likely to be introduced to the following:

Simile: A simile is a comparison phrase which finds similar characteristics in two objects and compares them, always by using the words 'like' or 'as'. For example:

The pond was like a shiny, round coin. He ran as fast as a high-speed train.

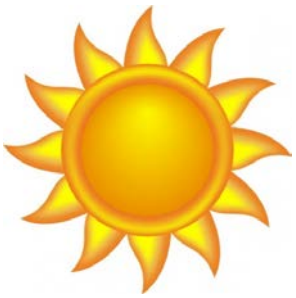
Metaphor: A metaphor is a comparison which is not literally true. It suggests what something is like by comparing it with something else with similar characteristics. It is like a simile, but instead of using 'like' or 'as' it compares by suggesting that something is something else. For example:

He was putty in her hands. (Meaning: he could be easily manipulated by her.)

You are the light of my life. (Meaning: you give me hope and happiness.)

Personification: Personification is a type of figurative language which gives an object human characteristics (emotions, sensations, speech, physical movements).

Personification examples:



The branches of the tree danced in the wind.

She was swallowed by the waves.

The warm sun smiled down on us.

Onomatopoeia: This is when a word makes the sound of the thing it describes (for example: boom, honk, pop, crack, cuckoo, crack, splat, tweet, zoom, sizzle, whizz).

Hyperbole: This is when exaggeration is used for effect. For example:

I had to read a book that was about a million pages long.

The children were so excited they were bouncing off the walls.

Figurative language teaching in KS2

The 2014 literacy national curriculum states the following as objectives for Y5 and 6:

• Pupils should be taught to discuss and evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader.

• Pupils should plan their writing by ... considering how authors have developed characters and settings in what pupils have read, listened to or seen performed.

This means that in Year 5 and Year 6 **teachers will draw children's attention to the various types of figurative language** explained above. They will then **encourage children to use these forms of language in their own writing.** Teachers often introduce children to simile and onomatopoeia in Year 3 or 4 and then may introduce metaphor, personification and hyperbole in Year 5 or 6. It is usually best for children to **work for some time on one particular form of figurative language.** When learning about similes, for example, classroom activities might include the following:

• The teacher might spend one or two lessons encouraging children to find similes in the poetry they are reading.

• The children might then spend another two lessons writing their own similes.

• The teacher might encourage them to improve their similes by adding extra information. For example, if a child wrote: 'The girl's hair was as yellow as the sun' they might be encouraged to add extra adjectives.

Fronted adverbials

Fronted adverbials, words or phrases that describe the action in a sentence, are introduced to KS2 children in Year 4. Find out how to identify them and how your child will be taught to use fronted adverbials in their writing in our parents' guide to primary grammar concepts.

An **adverbial** is **a word or phrase that has been used like an adverb** to add detail or further information to a verb. (An easy way to remember what an adverb is: it **adds** to the **verb**.)

Adverbials are used to explain how, where or when something happened; they are like adverbs made up of more than one word.

For example:

We met by the train station.
He stood and waited under the clock.
The event will happen in June.
She danced all night long.
He ate his breakfast before sunrise.

In the sentences above, the verbs are in pink and the adverbials are in blue.

'Fronted' adverbials are 'fronted' because they have been moved to the front of the sentence, before the verb. In other words, fronted adverbials are words or phrases at the beginning of a sentence, used to describe the action that follows.

A comma is normally used after an adverbial (but there are plenty of exceptions to this rule). For example:

Before sunrise, he ate his breakfast.
All night long, she danced.
In June, the event will happen.
Under the clock, he stood and waited.
By the train station, we met.

The fronted adverbials in these sentences are in blue.

When are fronted adverbials taught in KS2?

Children are taught what a fronted adverbial is and how to use it correctly in their writing in Year 4.

In Year 5 and 6 children will continue to practise using adverbials in their writing and be encouraged to identify them in their reading, considering the effect it has on the sentence.

Fronted adverbials in primary school

The national curriculum states that grammar should be taught explicitly and children must learn the correct terminology.

Teachers will introduce children to fronted adverbials by showing them examples and modelling how to use them in their writing. They will explain what they are and encourage children to use the terminology. Children will then be given activities to complete in small groups or individually, for example:

- Playing games (possibly using ICT) to learn about adverbials
- Identifying and highlighting the fronted adverbials in texts
- Cutting up sentences to move the adverbials to the front and discussing the effect on the text

Children will be encouraged to use fronted adverbials in their extended writing, perhaps by experimenting with sentences by moving the adverbials to the front (it works better for some sentences than others!). Using a few fronted adverbials will add interest and variation to a child's writing, but too many will make it hard to read, so it's important to get the balance right.

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Full stops

Children start learning about punctuation in Reception and Y1 when they are introduced to full stops and their use. Understand how and when your child learns to use full stops correctly with our parents' punctuation guide.

A full stop is a punctuation mark used to separate sentences. Full stops (and capital letters) are the first grammatical terms children are introduced to at school.

In American English, full stops can also be referred to as 'periods'.

Full stops are used at the end of a sentence. The most basic sentences (simple sentences) consist of one subject and one verb and usually end with a full stop. For example:

The tiger chased the deer.
The dog barked.
My sister rode her bike.

Once a sentence has a verb and a subject, a full stop (or a question mark or an exclamation mark, which children are introduced to later in KS1) can be placed to let the reader know that the sentence, or a complete thought, has ended.

When do children learn about full stops in primary school?

Full stops are not required to be taught until Year 1, when a child reaches KS1. However, many Reception teachers introduce capital letters, finger spaces (a finger sized gap between words) and full stops during a child's first year at school in Reception. Many EYFS teachers believe that it is far simpler for a child to learn how to officially end a sentence when first learning to write, rather than introducing them later in Year 1. If not taught during EYFS, full stops will be introduced during Y1.

As with most teaching objectives, children's understanding of full stops is consolidated in every year group, even in Year 6! If your child keeps forgetting to place a full stop at the end of a sentence, check that they really understand how full stops are used. The earlier any misconceptions can be addressed, the better – it's hard to teach a child to use a semi-colon when they find full stops tricky!

Although a Year 1 topic, the teaching of full stops is part of more advanced grammar objectives, too. In Year 3, once inverted commas (speech marks) are introduced, children will learn to punctuate direct speech (words spoken directly) by ending the spoken words with a full stop, exclamation mark or question mark. For example:

The boy replied, "I'll be home after football."

In Year 5 and Year 6, when **bullet points** are taught, children are asked to either leave each bullet-pointed phrase without a full stop, or use a full stop every time. What is important is that they must use their choice consistently, and not change their punctuation choice between bullet points.

How are full stops taught in the primary classroom?

Your child will be encouraged to read or say aloud a basic sentence. They might also learn to perform an action to indicate where they think a full stop will be placed (this is known as 'Kung-fu' punctuation and really helps children to remember something needs to happen at the end of a sentence!).

Written work will help children to recognise where they think a sentence has ended and needs punctuating with a full stop.

Try asking your child to add the full stops to these sentences correctly:

Alice played on the swings
Vishal likes to visit his grandma after school Vishal's favourite food is pizza

Teachers will also encourage children to **'hold a sentence'**: this is a dictation-like technique according to which a short sentence is read out by the teacher and pupils are asked to remember it and try to write it down, placing a full stop at the end.

The writing of a series of independently-created sentences, ensuring all full stops are correctly placed, will be taught last. It is crucial that a child can speak aloud in sentences and can recognise sentences they read before they are expected to write them down accurately.

Graphemes

Your child will be taught about graphemes as part of their phonics learning journey. We explain what graphemes are and how you can help your child understand the concept at home.

A grapheme is a written symbol that represents a sound (phoneme). This can be a single letter, or could be a sequence of letters, such as ai, sh, igh, tch etc. So when a child says the sound /t/ this is a phoneme, but when they write the letter 't' this is a grapheme.

These are all the phonemes in the English language (and some of the graphemes used to represent them):

s sat	t tap	p pan	n nose	m mat	a ant	e egg	i ink	o otter
g goat	d dog	c k click	r run	h hat	u up	ai rain	ee knee	igh light
b bus	f farm	l lolly	j jam	v van	oa boat	oo cook	oo boot	ar star
w wish	x axe	y yell	z zap	qu quill	or fork	ur burn	ow now	oi boil
ch chin	sh ship	th think	th the	ng sing	ear near	air stair	ure sure	er writer

Learning to encode words: handwriting foundations

By the end of Reception children should be able to write all the graphemes above (encoding). Children will learn the letters of the alphabet, saying each sound out loud and writing the letter, but they will also learn how to put letters together to make individual sounds.

The importance of teaching children how to form letters carefully and thoroughly cannot be underestimated (for more information about how children learn to write, go to https://www.theschoolrun.com/english/handwriting).

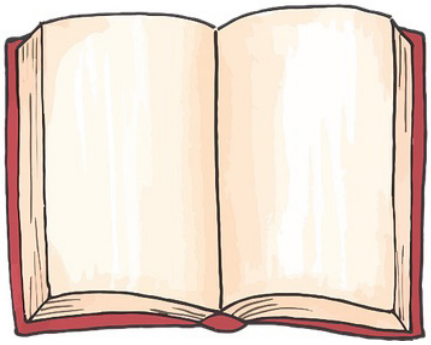
Obviously, it is really important that children know the letters that go with each sound, but it is also important that they form these letters correctly. Usually letters 'start from the top', apart from d and e. Children need to know how to form letters correctly, as when they come to join their letters, they will not be able to do this if they are forming them in the wrong way.

Teachers teach children how to form their letters correctly by giving demonstrations on the board, or by writing letters large in the air (with their backs to the children). Children are sometimes given sheets with letters on them which are marked with start points and arrows, so they are aware of where to start and which direction to go in.

Learning to spell: encoding

In English the sounds in words (phonemes) are represented by different combinations of letters when we write them down. In other words, one sound can be represented by a number of different graphemes according to the word it appears in and different graphemes can represent more than one sound. For example, in the words below, the letters 'ch' represent the /k/ sound in chemist, but the /sh/ sound in chef.

Guided reading



A guided reading session takes place every day in school. We explain what happens during these sessions and how you can help your child develop the skills of decoding and comprehension at home.

Teachers will designate half an hour in their timetable a day to a **reading session** for their class. They will work with a small number of children to analyse a text in detail, making sure each child can read each word and discussing the meaning of the text.

Teachers try to make sure that this group guided reading session is done every day so that at the end of each week, each child has had some quality reading time with a teacher. Sometimes a teacher will recognise that certain children need extra reading support and may arrange for them to read with a teaching assistant or another more able reader in the class.

How do guided reading sessions work?

Usually, teachers will set up a 'carousel' of activities. This means that there will be an activity laid out on each table and the children will move round to a different table each day, for example:

- **Reading topic books** The class may be learning about Ancient Eygpt, so there may be a pile of books here on that subject.
- **Grammar activity** Children may be given a set of worksheets to work on a grammar activity appropriate to their level.
- **Guided reading with the teacher / Choosing books** Children here may be sat near the book corner to be given the opportunity to choose a book to take home.
- **Writing table** Children may be given a selection of coloured paper, pens, cards, etc. and asked to write a letter to a friend.

Activities on the other tables may also include: phonics activities, newspapers, poetry books, practising spellings, drawing a story mountain / writing book reviews.

Guided reading explained

Children will be divided into ability groups, according to their reading levels. The teacher will choose a set of books for the group they are reading with, that is appropriate to their level. Generally, teachers need to think about two things when carrying out a guided reading session: decoding and comprehension.

Decoding means literally turning a written word into a spoken word, regardless of whether the meaning of that word has been understood. Teachers will teach children how to decode by encouraging them to split a word up and sound out all the separate sounds. They may also ask them to look at the picture to help them. Another strategy is to read the whole sentence to them, missing out the word they have struggled with, then asking them to work out what the word could be, based on what they have heard of the rest of the sentence.

Comprehension means understanding what has been read and being able to talk or write about it.

Retrieving information for the text: inference, deduction and prediction

Imagine the children were reading this text:

Jack arrived at the water's edge. He waited, but couldn't see anything yet. It was a summer evening and warm gusts of wind enveloped him. Every now and again the trees creaked and Jack jumped. Suddenly he began to be able to make out the outline of the boat approaching. One figure was sat down, rowing with a steady, rhythmic motion. The oars splashed gently into the water and then there was a whooshing sound as they pushed the water back. There was a dark, shadowy figure in the bow of the boat that looked like a man, but because it was night-time, Jack couldn't see his face. As soon as the boat came closer, the man in the bow jumped off the boat into the shallow water and pulled the boat by its rope towards the water's edge. Then Jack heard the man speak in a gruff, gravelly voice to the other person in the boat. He couldn't hear what he was saying but his voice sounded a bit like a dog growling quietly.

When carrying out a guided reading session, teachers encourage children to retrieve information from the text, which means literally looking for a bit of information and then reading it out. For example, when reading the above text, they might ask:

What season was it? What kind of sound did the oars make as they pushed the water back?

They also need to think about inference. This is sometimes called 'reading between the lines'. It is when you make a judgement about a character or a situation, by looking at the language used. For example:

What makes you think the man in the bow of the boat is a sinister character?

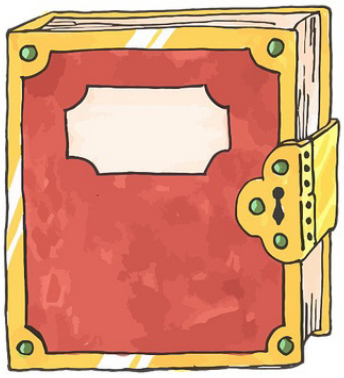
The teacher might ask children to discuss this in pairs, to give them some time to work out their answer. Children might pick up on the fact that he is described as a 'dark, shadowy figure' (even though it is dark and he is probably in the shadows, this hints at a kind of menace). They might also mention that he sounds like a 'dog growling quietly'.

Teachers will also think about **deduction.** This is sometimes called 'reading beyond the lines'. This means using the information you have read to come to your own conclusions about the text. Questions encouraging deduction could include:

Think about the man in the bows of the boat. What job do you think he does? Who do you think he is? What do you think he is doing?

Children might come up with all kinds of interesting theories here! They may decide that he is a pirate, at which point the teacher might ask them to back this up with evidence from the text. The children may answer that he is in a boat and has a gruff voice. They may decide that he is coming ashore to find some buried treasure.

Teachers also ask children questions based on prediction. This means encouraging a child to think about what might happen next. The idea of prediction is that children are not just guessing wildly, but they are thinking about what has already happened in the text in order to inform their predictions.



Haiku

Haikus are very short poems, usually about nature, which children often learn to write in KS2. From syllable structure to information about how they're taught in school, we explain what parents need to know.

What is a haiku?

A haiku is a form of poem that originates from Japan.

A haiku has three lines. There can be any number of words, but there must be five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line and five syllables in the third line. Haikus do not usually rhyme.

Here is an example of a haiku:

Fresh air after rain

Wet branches drip heavily

The soil is refreshed.

Teaching haikus encourages children to learn about syllables. Because haikus are very short, composing them is a good way of encouraging children to discipline themselves to find a few really good words to describe something.

Haikus in primary school

When children study haikus they will probably be given a range of them to read. They might be asked to perform the haikus, which would help to consider and convey the meaning of the poem. They would need to do plenty of work on looking at the syllables in these poems (a good activity to support this is for children to clap their hands on each syllable as they read).

In the process of **writing a haiku**, they might be given a subject to write about and asked to brainstorm this, by writing several different ideas on a spider diagram.

Some teachers encourage children to think about all five senses, so if they were

writing a haiku about autumn, they might be asked to consider sights, sounds, smells, tastes and things you can touch.

They would then need to think about their favourite descriptive words and phrases and try to write these into a sentence. They would then need to edit their writing so that they had achieved the correct number of syllables in each line. This process of drafting, editing and re-writing is crucial to helping children develop as writers.

High frequency words

As your child learns to read and spell they're likely to bring home lists of words. We look at ways in which you can reinforce the learning of high frequency words at home.

In Reception, your child will be given around 45 high frequency words to learn over the year – the aim is for them to be able to recognise these words and to be able to read them. Children learn these words as part of their phonics lessons and may also bring high frequency words home to read.

Why are they called high frequency?

High frequency words are common words, **words that appear very often in written texts**. They are a mixture of decodable words (words that can be sounded out) and tricky / exception words (words in which the English spelling code works in an unusual or uncommon way, which means the words have to be learned and recognised by sight).

It is really important that children learn how to read these words as they will make up a large proportion of the words they will be reading in everyday texts. They also need to learn to spell these words as they will find they will need to use them a great deal in their writing. (Research has shown that just 16 words, such as 'and', 'he', 'I' and 'in', but also the more phonetically-difficult 'the', 'to', 'you', 'said', 'are', 'she' and 'was', make up a quarter of the words in texts for adults and children.)

The top 100 high frequency words (in order of frequency of use) are:
the, and, a, to, said, in, he, I, of, it, was, you, they, on, she, is, for, at, his, but, that, with, all, we, can, are, up, had, my, her, what, there, out, this, have, went, be, like, some, so, not, then, were, go, little, as, no, mum, one, them, do, me, down, dad, big, when, it's, see, looked, very, look, don't, come, will, into, back, from, children, him, Mr, get, just, now, came, oh, about, got, their, people, your, put, could, house, old, too, by, day, made, time, I'm, if, help, Mrs, called, here, off, asked, saw, make, an.

What order do children learn high frequency words in?

Children are taught to read in phonics 'phases', and each phase has a corresponding list of high frequency words to learn.

High frequency words in Reception

Phase 2 phonics is generally taught at the beginning of Reception year. **Phase 3 phonics** is generally taught in the middle / towards the end of Reception. **Phase 4 phonics** is generally taught at the end of Reception / beginning of Year 1.

High frequency words in KS1

	Decodable words	Tricky words
Phase 2 phonics high frequency words	a, an, as, at, and, back, big, but, can, dad, had, get, got, him, his, if, in, is, it, mum, not, on, of, off, up	the, no, to, into, go, I
Phase 3 phonics high frequency words	down, for, look, now, see, that, them, this, then, too, will, with	all, are, be, he, her, me, my, she, they, was, we, you
Phase 4 phonics high frequency words	went, children, it's, just, from, help	come, do, have, like, little, one, out, said, so, some, there, were, what, when

In Years 1 and 2, the list is expanded and includes 'about', 'because', 'once', 'could', 'house', 'laugh', 'people', 'their', plus days of the week, months of the year and the child's own address and the school's address. By now children are expected to be able to read most of them and progress to writing some of them.

	Decodable words	Tricky words
Phase 5 phonics high frequency words	don't, day, old, made, I'm, came, by, make, time, here, saw, house, very, about, your	Oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, could

How should my child be practising these words?

"Make it fun and don't overdo it," advises Ian McNeilly, director of the National Association for the Teaching of English. For example, why not try:

• Flashcards – but don't use drawings alongside or your child may simply stick to looking at the drawing, not the letters. "A child's ability to concentrate depends on their individual personality," says Ian. "Five minutes could be enough for some, while others could do more." You can **download free high frequency words flashcards** from TheSchoolRun for Reception, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

• Cut out high frequency word lists and stick them on a prominent place (the fridge, the back of the cereal packet, etc.), so your child has a visible reminder.

• Magnetic letters – good for helping children with tricky words.

• Memory games – place flashcards downwards for a game of pairs.

• Ask your child to look out for high frequency words on signs or advertisments when you're on a journey or a shopping trip.

• Choose three or four of the words and help your child make a silly sentence containing as many of them as possible.

• Make sure your child sees you reading. "You are their best role model so show them you enjoy reading," says Ian, "and make sure books in the house are easily available, not tidied away."

My child doesn't seem to be interested in looking at the words together.

Don't worry, and don't insist – all children learn at their own pace. "Don't get too hung up if your child is not at the same stage as other children," says Ian. "In the classroom, there can be a nine-month age gap between children – that's 20 percent of their life in Reception – and it does make a big difference."

How are high frequency words taught at school?

Teachers have various different methods of getting children used to reading and spelling high frequency words, for example:

• Large flashcards and posters up around the classroom so that children are

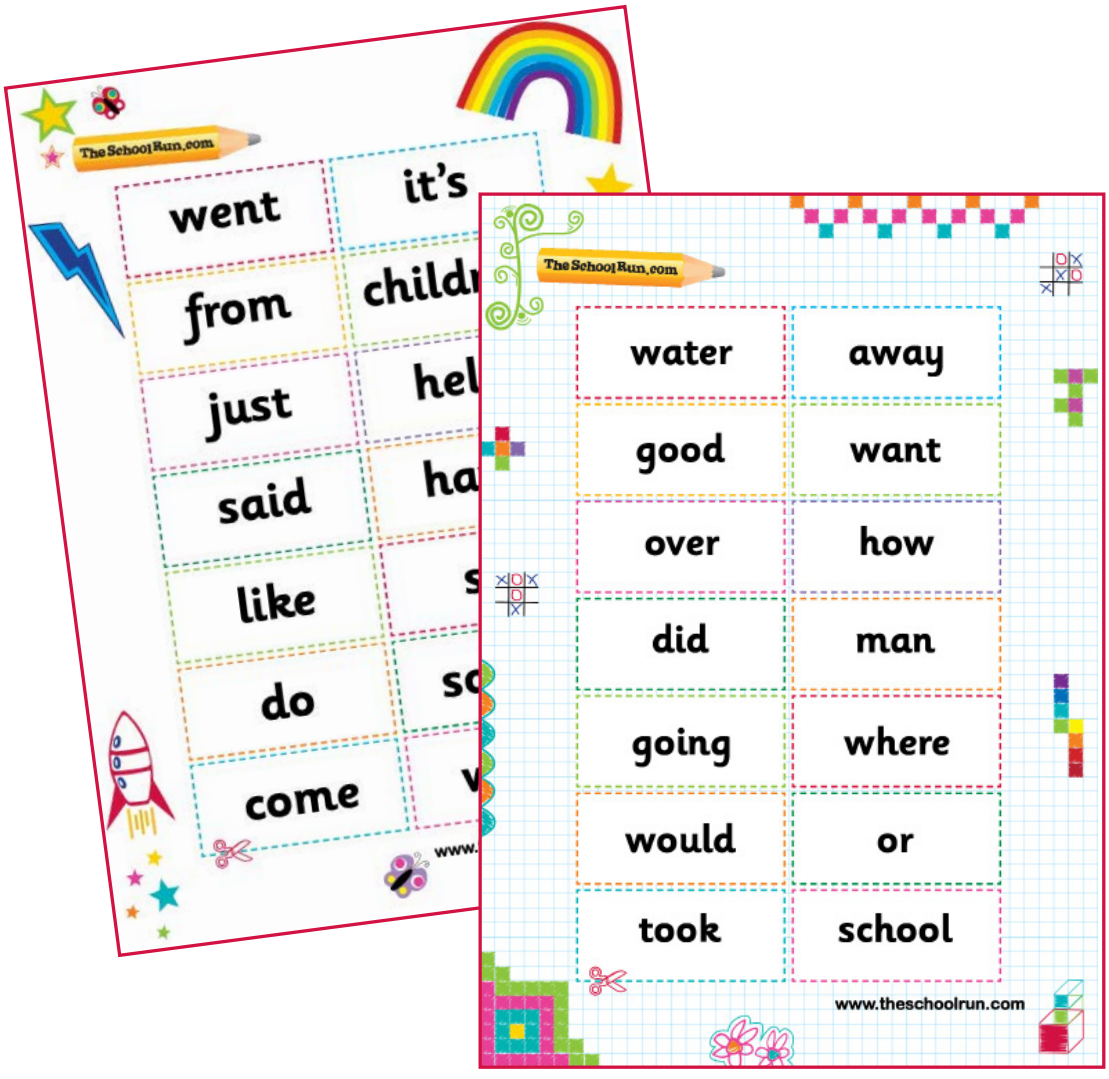
constantly made aware of these words.

• Daily reading at school and recommendations for daily reading sessions at home with parents.

• Spelling lists sent home for children to learn on a weekly basis.

• 'Look, cover, write, check' sessions at school, where children are given a word to look at, then cover it over, write it from memory, then uncover the word and check if they were correct.

• Giving children handwriting practice using their high frequency words – practising joining one letter to another helps them to remember the letter strings of these words.



Homophones

Homophones are tricky words which sound the same but have different meanings and are sometimes spelled differently. We explain how your child will be introduced to homophones in the classroom and tricks you can try at home to help them master homophone spelling.

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings.

Some homophones are **pronounced the same way and spelled the same way but have different meanings** (homonyms). For example:

rose (the flower) and *rose* (past tense of the verb to rise)

book (something we read) and *book* (to schedule something)

Some homophones are **pronounced the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings**. For example:

wait (the verb) and *weight* (how heavy something is)

they're (they are) and *their* (belonging to them) and *there* (adverb of place)

What is a homonym?

Homonyms are a kind of homophone, words that are written and said the same way but have different meanings. Examples of homonyms are *spring* (the season) and *spring* (to jump up).

What is a homograph?

Homographs are words that are **written the same way, but pronounced differently** (for example, to *wind* a clock but blowing *wind*). Homographs are not homophones (because they don't sound the same).

Homophones learned in primary school

Children have to learn a set list of homophones under the national curriculum. They are often given a list of homophones to learn for their spellings in each year group.

Year	Homophones		
Year 2	*there, their, they're*	*bare, bear*	*two, to, too*
	here, hear	*one, won*	*be, bee*
	see, sea	*sun, son*	*blue, blew*
			night, knight
Years 3 and 4	*accept, except*	*grate, great*	*meat, meet*
	affect, effect	*grown, groan*	*medal, meddle*
	ball, bawl	*heel, heal, he'll*	*missed, mist*
	berry, bury	*knot, not*	*peace, piece*
	brake, break	*mail, male*	*plain, plane*
	fair, fare	*main, mane*	*rain, rein, reign*
			scene, seen
			weather, whether
			whose, who's
Years 5 and 6	*licence, license*	*heard, herd*	*principal, principle*
	practice, practise	*lead, led*	*profit, prophet*
	prophecy, prophesy	*morning, mourning*	*stationary, stationery*
	father, farther	*past, passed*	*steal, steel*
	guessed, guest	*precede, proceed*	*whose, who's*

Teaching children homophones helps them to widen their vocabulary by learning the meaning of new words and also provides an opportunity to practise and improve spelling.

Teachers teach homophones in a number of ways:

- 'Fill the gap' worksheets showing homophones used in the context of different sentences.
- **Writing lists of homophones on a class display** for children to see every day.
- Sending home lists of homophones for children to learn for spelling tests.
- Encouraging children to **write sentences containing a pair of homophones.**
- **Homophone games** involving cards with words written on them (matching the pairs of homophones or matching a word to its definition).

hair hare

wait weight

write right

whole hole

see sea

heard herd

steel steal

Imperative verbs

Do you know how imperative or "bossy" verbs are used in instruction texts? We explain how children are introduced to imperatives from Year 2 onwards, with examples of how they are taught in the primary classroom.

Verbs are words which express actions.

An imperative verb is one that tells someone to do something, so that the sentence it is in becomes an order or command. For example in this sentence (a command, outlining an action that must be done):

Fold your clothes up.

the imperative verb is 'fold'.

Imperative verbs are used in instruction manuals and recipes, for example:

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTACHING A LIGHT FITTING

- Attach the small metal panel to the ceiling.
- Thread the wires through the panel and attach to the new circular fitting.
- Place the glass part of the light into the circular fitting. Line up the holes and (with a screwdriver) screw the four small screws in so that they are secure.
- Adjust the height of the fitting, push the button in and extend the wire to the required length.

When are chilren taught about imperative verbs?

Children are introduced to imperative verbs (also known as "bossy verbs"!) in Year 2 grammar lessons.

What are children taught about using imperatives at primary school?

Children are taught to write **instruction texts** in both KS1 and KS2.

The unit of learning may start with a variety of instruction texts. The teacher will explain to children that some verbs are used in a way that tells someone how to do something; these verbs turn the sentence into a command or order.

Children may be asked to go through, identify and highlight the imperative verbs in the text. They may recognise that **imperative verbs are usually used at the start of a sentence.**

Some children, therefore, may see a command like this:

> **Slowly fold the egg mixture into the cream and sugar.**

and misidentify the word ‘slowly’ as an imperative verb because it is at the beginning of the sentence. ‘Slowly’ is actually an adverb, describing how an action is done.

Teachers will also show children **how instructions are set out (with bullet points, numbers and pictures).**

HOW TO MAKE CHICKEN CURRY

- Chop the onion, garlic and ginger finely.
- Heat the oil and then cook the onion, garlic and ginger in the oil until softened.
- Add turmeric, chilli flakes and cumin and cook for a further five minutes.
- Add the tinned tomatoes and cook for about ten minutes, until reduced.
- Add the chopped chicken and cook with a lid on for a further ten minutes.

A good way to support children in writing their own instructions is for a teacher to ask the children to carry out an activity, such as making a sandwich, playing a game or performing a magic trick. Once children have done this, they will be asked to write their own instructions relating to the activity they have carried out. They will be asked to use imperative verbs, bullet points, numbers and pictures in their writing as they have been shown.

As children move up the school, teachers may increase the challenge of writing instructions, by asking children to write instructions for more complex tasks or suggesting that they include adverbs in their writing.

How will children be tested on imperative verbs in the Year 2 and 6 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling Tests?

Children are often tested on commands in the Year 2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test (a command contains an imperative verb). To test their knowledge of commands, they may be given four sentences and asked to pick out the one that is a command.

In the Year 6 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test, children may have to answer questions on imperative verbs. For example, they may be given a sentence and asked to underline the imperative verb.

What are imperative verbs? What are imperative verbs?
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Information text

Information texts are an important part of primary school literacy lessons. We explain the features of this non-fiction genre, why note-taking matters and how to help your child at home.

An information text is a piece of non-fiction writing which gives information about a particular thing (for example: Cleopatra, Ancient Egypt, recycling or volcanoes). Information texts are sometimes called **non-chronological reports**, because they are giving information about something without mentioning the order in which events took place.

How are information texts taught in primary school?

Children will usually be asked to research something relevant to their learning, for example: if they are learning about the Victorians in history, they may be asked to research a certain area, such as child labour or Victorian funerals. They will look at various texts and discuss the features:

- main title
- subheadings
- bullet points
- paragraphs
- pictures and captions.

They will then make notes on their topic, possibly on a spider diagram.

Note-making is an important skill and it cannot be taken for granted that children automatically know how to do it! Teachers will model this skill, by reading a sentence shown on the board and then asking children to say which the most important words are. For example, they might show a paragraph like this:

If a Victorian woman lost her husband she was called a widow. The period of time

after her husband's death was called mourning. She would wear black for two years while she was in full mourning. She would then spend a period of six months in half mourning, during which time she would wear grey or lavender clothes.

They might then model note-making in the following way:

Once children have written notes from various sources, they will write a **draft** of their information text. Teachers will support them in editing and re-writing this report, by encouraging them to use correct punctuation and sentences that make sense containing connectives.

Children then need to plan and write their 'neat' version. They need to think about the **layout** of this, including the main title, what will be in each paragraph, whether there will be a bullet-pointed list and where the pictures and captions will go. Emphasis needs to be placed on designing the report so that the layout is clear and eye-catching.

Instruction text

We read instruction texts on an everyday basis. In primary school your child will be taught to recognise the main features and write increasingly complicated instruction texts as part of their non-fiction literacy work.

An instruction text is a text that explains to someone how to do something, such as bake a cake, play a game or work a DVD player.

How are instruction texts taught in primary school?

Children will be shown a range of instruction texts, such as recipes, manuals and game instructions. They will discuss the features of instruction texts:

- clear layout
- a 'You will need' list which explains what ingredients or tools are required
- numbered points
- **'bossy' verbs (imperative verbs)** such as 'put', 'take', 'mix', 'spread'
- Instruction texts also often use time connectives at the start of each numbered point ('First', 'Next', 'Then' and 'Lastly').

In class, children may be **given some instructions to follow** and be asked to discuss how effective they are. This helps them to understand the importance of clear and comprehensive instructions.

Children will then be asked to **draft their own instruction text**. This could be related to something they are doing at school (for example, if they are making puppets, they might write an instruction text explaining how to do this). A teacher may give them a **writing frame with boxes** and numbers to help them set out their writing. Children will be asked to edit and improve their writing if they have forgotten any of the main features, or if some of their instructions do not make sense.

The aim of an instruction text is to be clear and concise, rather than descriptive.

As children move up the school, they may be expected to write more complicated instruction texts, with detailed labelled diagrams.

Irregular verbs

Children learn to use irregular verbs naturally as they speak and write English, but will also understand more about them during their time at primary school. We explain how irregular verbs are introduced in the classroom in our guide for parents.

A verb is a doing or being word (for example: *sit, talk, eat, think, feel*).

A **verb tense** tells us **when the action or state described by the verb happened**. The three main verb tenses in English are the present, the past, and the future.

While most verbs form their different tenses according to an established "formula", **some verbs don't form their tenses in a regular way: irregular verbs.**

How do irregular verbs work?

When we put a verb into the past tense, we usually add the suffixes -d, -ed or -ied, for example:

	Present tense	Past tense
Most verbs form the past tense by adding -ed	walk answer borrow listen play	walked answered borrowed listened played
Verbs with a short vowel ending in a consonant form the past tense by doubling the consonant before adding -ed	pat fit stop pet step	patted fitted stopped petted stepped
Verbs that end in -e form the past tense by adding -d	hope announce bounce raise share	hoped announced bounced raised shared
Verbs that end in -y form the past tense by changing the y into i and adding -d	hurry worry cry copy rely	hurried worried cried copied relied

Some verbs are irregular and do not follow this pattern but form their past tense in a particular way (by changing a vowel, for example); sometimes their past participle is the same as the past tense (as it is in regular verbs), but sometimes it differs.

The change-of-vowel past participles below differ from the past tense of the verb.

	Verb	Past tense	Past participle
Verbs ending in -ay	pay say lay	paid said laid	paid said laid
A double vowel changing to a single vowel	shoot choose	shot chose	shot chosen
A change of vowel	know rise ride sing come give	knew rose rode sang came gave	known risen ridden sung come given
Verbs ending in -eep, changing to -ept	sleep weep keep	slept wept kept	slept wept kept

The **past participle** of a verb is used:

- to describe an action that has been completed in the past using the past perfect tense: *The floor has been swept.*
- to write a sentence in the passive voice: *The jacket was torn by Louise.*
- as an adjective: *Nothing can mend my broken heart.*

When do children learn about irregular verbs in primary school?

In **Year 1**, children will learn how to add the suffix -ed to a regular verb to put it into the past tense (for example: hunt - hunted, jump - jumped, etc.).

In **Year 2**, children will learn about verbs that have a short vowel and a consonant (for example, pop). When these verbs are put in the past tense, the last consonant needs to be doubled before -ed is added (popped).

Though there is nothing in the national curriculum to say that irregular verbs should be explicitly taught at primary school, most of us learn them simply by speaking and writing the English language every day. The correct use of irregular verb forms is part of Standard English.

Journalistic writing

Hold the front page! Primary-school children study the features of news reports (headlines, pictures, captions, quotations) and often learn to write their own article, usually related to a theme they are studying. Here's how you can support their learning at home.

Children learn about newspaper articles (or journalistic writing) as part of the English curriculum. This **non-fiction** genre is often taught in Y6, usually over three or four weeks.

At the start of the unit, children are shown various newspaper articles and are asked to comment on the features of journalistic writing which include:

- headline
- byline
- photos with captions
- fact
- opinion
- direct speech (quotations)
- reported speech
- words presented in columns on the page

How is journalistic writing taught in primary school?

On starting this unit, a teacher will usually give children a variety of newspaper articles to look at. The class will then discuss the features, possibly starting with the headline.

Headlines

The teacher will ask the children why the headline is in large, bold font. They may need to explain that **the headline acts as a title or heading which tells the reader, at a glance, what the article is about**. It could be a straightforward explanation of

fact, for example:

It could also be a humorous play on words. For example, the headline on an article about a local Easter egg hunt might be:

Articles will vary as to how they are set out.

Some articles have bylines, which appear below the headline.

Bylines

A byline may include one or all of the following things: the name of the person who wrote the article, their position, the place they travelled to get the story and a brief sentence summing up what the article is about. For example:

John Smith, Staff Writer, reports on Fairhill Primary Summer Fair

Melody Orukope, Los Angeles

Captions

Newspaper articles often include **photos of the people or events involved.** A teacher may discuss with children why this is. For example: if the article was about the biggest ship in the world, people would want to see an actual picture of it, rather than just read the description. If the article was about an important person, you would

need to be able to identify them. These photos would usually have captions beneath them, **explaining who or what is in the photo.**

Fact and opinion in newspaper articles

A teacher will usually take some time reading through particular articles with children so that they get a feel for the language used.

They will usually discuss the **difference between fact and opinion** in the articles. For example: if they are reading an article in a local newspaper about the egg hunt on Manor Farm they might read the following paragraph:

Last Saturday, children were overjoyed to take part in an egg hunt arranged by Mick Holmes, owner of Manor Farm. Eggs of various colours were hidden all around the farm, and one lucky girl, Faye Whiting, struck gold when she found a giant egg hidden in a pile of hay!

Children would need to get into the habit of being able to spot the opinions (children being 'overjoyed' and one girl being 'lucky') and the facts (the hunt being arranged by Mick Holmes, the egg hidden in a pile of hay).

Direct and indirect speech in journalistic writing

Another feature of journalistic writing is the use of quotations.

Quotations

A quotation is a piece of **direct speech that comes from a person associated with the article.** Quotations are written in speech marks. Children might be asked to highlight these in the newspaper article, for example:

> **Mr Holmes organises the Easter Egg Hunt every year to raise money for Cancer Research. Children pay £1 to take part. "My mother had cancer three years ago," explained Mr Holmes when asked about the charitable event. "If it wasn't for Cancer Research she wouldn't have pulled through."**

A teacher may discuss the need for quotations in a newspaper article with the class. Children will be made aware that quotations are essential, because it is important

to get people's opinions on various matters. Sometimes a journalist will write about what someone has said using **reported speech** (also known as indirect speech, highlighted in yellow below):

> **While the children were on the farm they were invited to feed the chickens and watched as a cow was milked. Mr Holmes explained that this was an important experience as many children might not know where the milk in their fridge comes from.**

Writing a newspaper article in primary English

Once the children were fully aware of the features of a newspaper article, they would move onto gathering information to write their own.

1. The teacher might **choose an event** for the whole class to write about, or they might allow the children to choose their own topic.

2. The children would be encouraged to **start by researching and making notes**, so if they were writing a report on the school summer fair they might be asked to use a notepad to make notes on what they could see.

3. Children would also need to **interview people** to provide quotations for their newspaper report, so they might write a list of questions to ask various people at the fair. The teacher might do some work with children beforehand on the difference between open questions (those which require the answer to be expansive, such as: 'Why did you decide to set up a stall here?') and closed questions (those which require only a one-word answer, such as: 'Are you enjoying yourself?')

4. Children would then need to look at their notes and interviews and start **writing a rough draft of their report.** They would need to think about what order to put all the different elements in and where to start and end each paragraph. A teacher would usually encourage re-drafting, either by marking the writing suggesting improvements or by asking the children to look at each other's writing.

5. Finally, children would need to think about the **layout of their newspaper article.** They would need to think about their headline, photos and captions and how this was all going to be arranged on the page. They might be given the opportunity to present their finished piece on the computer.

Kenning

Your child's KS2 poetry classes might include analysis of kennings, two-word phrases characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry. We explain what this literary device is and how your child might read and write kennings in the primary-school classroom.

Kennings are often used in poetry for effect. A kenning is a figure of speech, a roundabout, two-word phrase used in the place of a one-word noun.

Kennings were first used in Anglo-Saxon and Norse poetry. The famous Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf uses many kennings, for example:

- Body – bone-house
- Sword – battle-light
- Ship – wave-floater
- Sea – whale-road

Kennings are sometimes metaphorical. For example, looking at the kennings above, the body is not really a house, but it does provide a 'house' for bones; a sword is not really a 'light', but it reflects the light so appears like one; the sea is not really a 'road', but it is something that whales need to travel, so acts like a road for them.

Kennings can be used to describe everyday people, animals and objects, for example:

- Dog – face-licker
- Baby – noise-maker
- Computer – data-giver

Kennings in primary school

Studying kennings is not compulsory under the national curriculum, but they are a fun way of playing with words (especially if children are studying the Anglo-Saxons or *Beowulf*). It is most likely that they would be taught in Year 5 or 6.

Children might be asked to write a poem on a particular topic and think of as many kennings as possible. For example: they might be asked to write a poem about the sun. A teacher might start them off by asking them to produce a spider diagram with the word 'sun' in the middle. They might be asked to write as many words around the outside relating to the sun as they can think of, for example: wakes us up in the morning, helps plants to grow, nice and warm, sun-burn, hot holidays, dries up the rain, makes the soil very dry, makes us sweat, makes us want to drink lots of water.

The children might then be encouraged to turn these ideas into two-word kennings, for example:

- Bird-waker
- Warmth-provider
- Skin-burner
- Drought-maker
- Plant-feeder
- Thirst-maker

kenning kenning kenning
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The teacher might ask the children to look through their kennings and just choose the best ones. They might be encouraged to 'peer-tutor', swapping their writing with a partner and helping each other to improve the work. This process of editing and improving is vital in encouraging children to produce their best work possible.

Often, to motivate children and encourage them to value their own work, to finish a piece of work they might be asked to produce their poem in 'neat' for a display. This might involve drawing pictures and borders to go with their poem, or writing it up on the computer.

Letter sounds

By the end of Reception your child should know the sound each letter makes. Find out how your child will be taught letter sounds in school and how you can support learning at home.

Teachers often talk about children knowing their letter sounds. This literally means that when a child sees a letter, they are able to say what sound it makes.

By the end of Reception, children should be able to make the correct sound for each letter of the alphabet. They should know each letter in both its small and capital form.

Foundation Stage teachers usually have all the letters of the alphabet on display in the classroom, along with pictures of objects whose names begin with each letter. Some schools follow a teaching programme that involves learning a song for each letter of the alphabet. Teachers will carry out various activities with the children to help them learn their letter sounds:

• **Collecting or grouping pictures of objects that all start with a particular letter. A child may be given a piece of paper with the letter** 't' on it, then asked to look through a box full of pictures, picking out the pictures of objects that start with a 't'. They may be asked to look for objects at home starting with a certain letter.

• **Singing alphabet songs** to encourage children to match a spoken sound with a written letter. A really good one is 'If you're happy and you know it' which can be adapted to any letter of the alphabet. For example: if you are learning the letter 'y' you can sing: 'If you're happy and you know it, yawn like me'. This could be accompanied by the teacher pointing to the letter 'y' on the board and the children miming yawning.

• Some teachers may have **large models of letters** that they can play whole class games with; for example, they may get the children to sit in a circle and then put various objects in the middle. They may choose one child to hold a letter and then see if they can pick out the object in the middle that starts with that letter.

• **Activities on the computer that involve children hearing letter sounds and picking them from a list**, or being given a picture and being asked to choose the letter that object starts with.

Once children have learnt their letter sounds they will then start to write the letters themselves. Teachers may carry out the following activities to support this learning:

• **Encouraging children to write a certain letter with their finger in a sand tray.** This can be a good activity to do with children before you encourage them to pick up a pen and start writing. It can also be good for children who find gripping a pen difficult.

• Giving children a lined piece of paper or lined mini-whiteboard with a particular letter written on it. Children need to **copy the letter** a few times, making sure they are forming it correctly and keeping it on the line.

Letter strings

Learning certain letter strings will help your child with their reading and spelling. Find out about different letter strings and tips to help your child remember them.

str ight eight ought ould

A letter string is a group of letters that appear in a word. For example, these words:

string straight strike strain

str

all contain the letter string 'str'. Children in Key Stage 1 may find this letter string difficult to read or spell, so teachers may help them with this, by giving them a variety of activities that encourage them to read or spell these words.

Teachers may also concentrate on letter strings that come at the end of a word. For example: all these words have the letter string 'ight':

light right sight tight

ight

Teachers may encourage children to learn to read and spell these words, by giving them spelling lists containing words that all have the same letter string to take home. The more the children read and write these words, the more they will embed the knowledge that the letters 'ight' always make the same sound.

Teachers may also draw children's attention to the fact that two words may contain the same letter string, but with different pronunciation, for example:

height weight

eight

Both these words contain the letter string 'eight', however it is pronounced differently with each word.

Similarly, these words:

drought *brought*

contain the same letter string ‘ought’ but are pronounced differently.

Tricky letter strings

Sometimes a letter string can come up very often in books, but a teacher may notice many children in their class are spelling it wrong. A common one is ‘ould’:

could *should* *would*

Sometimes teachers give children a mnemonic to help them learn certain letter strings. A mnemonic is a memory aid, where a word is given for each letter that needs to be remembered. A popular mnemonic for ‘ould’ is ‘**o u l**ucky **d**uck’.

Children often find the letter string at the start of the word ‘beautiful’ difficult to spell, as it is made up of three vowels. A good mnemonic to help them remember this is ‘big elephants always understand’.

Look, Cover, Write, Check

Look, Cover, Write, Check is a strategy your child will be taught in schools to help them learn spellings. Find out how the strategy is taught in the classroom so you can reinforce learning at home in the same way.

Look, Cover, Write, Check is a strategy used to help children learn their spellings. A child is given a word to spell and:

- looks at it
- covers it over with a piece of paper or their hand
- writes the spelling again next to the word
- uncovers the spelling to check if they have got it right.

This is a good method to teach children so that they practise learning the spellings of words, but also so that they are testing themselves.

Look, Cover, Write, Check in the primary-school classroom

Children are usually given weekly spelling lists throughout their time at primary school and this strategy is often suggested by teachers for children to use at home.

Teachers sometimes give children **Look, Cover, Write, Check grids** so that they can test themselves a few times. For example, if a child were learning spellings ending -tion, these might be put in a column on the left and then a few more blank columns provided so that children could practise writing the spelling a few times to learn it.

information			
detention			
station			
intervention			

Teachers may also write out spellings children have got wrong in their writing and encourage them to use this strategy to learn these spellings as well.

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech where two things that are normally unrelated are compared to each other. Find out how teachers explain metaphors to school children in primary school with our guide.

A metaphor is a comparison which is not literally true. It suggests what something is like by comparing it with something else with similar characteristics. For example:

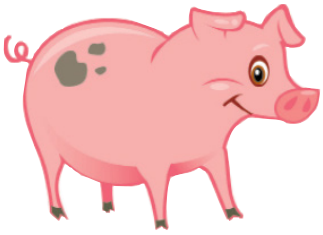
My brother is a piglet is a metaphor.

This statement isn't literally true – a child cannot be a pig – but the brother can share a pig's characteristics, like eating lots or liking to play in the mud!

Unlike a simile, metaphors do not use the words 'like' or 'as'.

Simile: My brother is as greedy as a piglet.

Metaphor: My brother is a piglet.



Metaphor examples

These are the kinds of metaphors we might hear in everyday use:

Life is a journey	Our lives are not journeys from one place to another, but they have some of the same characteristics as journeys.
We are all in the same boat	***We say this when people's circumstances are the same (but they are not in an actual boat or on water!).***
You had him in the palm of your hand	This expression means that you had someone under your total control.
My knight in shining armour	***This phrase is meant to express the fact that someone is as brave as a knight.***
My memory is a little foggy	This expression conveys that someone has a poor memory; fog conveys the fact that things cannot be remembered clearly.
Education is a gateway to success	***This means that education ensures success. The idea of a gateway makes the concept clearer and perhaps more vivid to the listener.***

Metaphors in primary school

Teachers will tend to start talking about metaphors in Year 5 and 6 (or possibly with able Year 4 pupils). They may comment on them when reading stories or poems, and they may encourage children to use metaphors in their own writing.

Metaphors are commonly used in poetry. For example:

...love... is the star to every wandering bark...

In Sonnet 116 William Shakespeare uses a metaphor (stating that love is a star) to compare love to the north star, fixed for every bark (boat).

In his poem A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning, John Donne uses metaphors to describe the souls of two people in love. The souls are a piece of gold, which can be beaten very thin but will expand; they are also the two legs of a compass, always linked even when one leg moves.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,

Though I must go, endure not yet

A breach, but an expansion,

Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so

As stiff twin compasses are two;

Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show

To move, but doth, if the other do.

Working in the classroom, a teacher might read a poem with the children and ask them to identify the metaphors used. Children might discuss what all the different phrases mean before the teacher goes onto discussing the metaphors and why they were chosen. The idea of activities like these is to help children to understand that **metaphors make writing more effective and can bring a subject alive for a reader.**

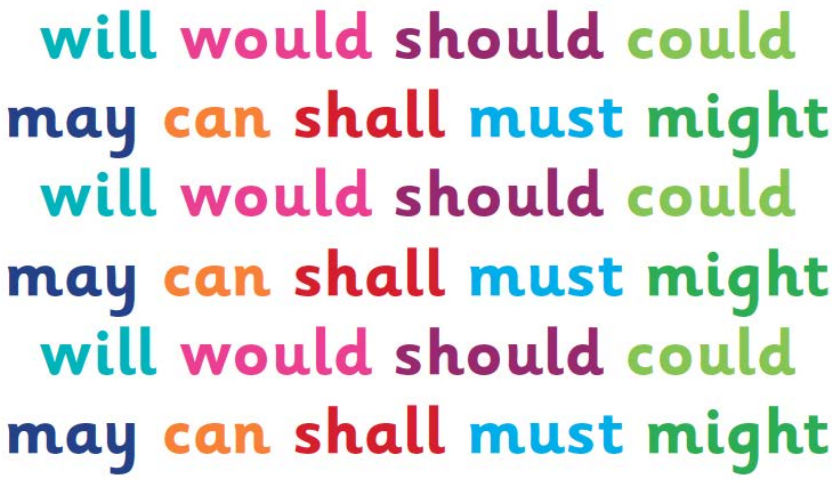
Modal verbs

Modal verbs indicate possibility, obligation or ability. Find out how your child will be taught about modal verbs in grammar lessons in KS2 and the kinds of activities they might be asked to complete in the classroom.

A modal verb is a special type of verb.

Modal verbs change or affect other verbs in a sentence. They are used to show the level of possibility, indicate ability, show obligation or give permission. Modal verbs behave differently to 'ordinary' verbs. Common modal verbs are:

- will
- would
- should
- could
- may
- can
- shall
- ought to
- must
- might



Modal verbs explained

Possibility

Modal verbs can be used when we want to show how likely something is to happen. For example:

It might rain tomorrow. / "I shall go to the ball!" said Cinderella.

We will have fish and chips for tea.

Ability

Modal verbs can be used when we want to show a skill or ability to do something:

Jack can sing.

We could walk.

Obligation and advice

Modal verbs can be used to state when something is necessary/compulsory, to give an instruction or to give advice. For example:

You must tidy your room.

She ought to help with the shopping.

James should cook the dinner tonight.

Permission

Modal verbs are used to give or ask for permission for an activity. For example:

You may have another biscuit.

You can get down from the table now.

Could I go to the toilet, please?

What and how are children taught about modal verbs in primary school?

Since September 2014 the national curriculum has required children to be taught grammar more explicitly.

Children will be familiar with words such as will, would, should, could, can, may, might, shall, must and ought to in KS1 and lower KS2 through reading and most likely use them in their writing. However, in Year 5 children will be formally taught the grammatical term modal verb.

In **Year 5 children should be able to identify modal verbs in texts when reading and will be shown the different effects of using modal verbs** in their writing via teacher modelling and they will most likely be given exercises or short writing tasks to complete. Children may be asked to highlight modal verbs in a text, discuss the effect of a modal verb on a sentence when reading, and choose a modal verb to complete a sentence or change a modal verb to alter a sentence in a writing task.

Modelled writing

Modelled writing is a technique teachers use to model for children how they could carry out the thinking process when writing a story. Read on for an example of how this process could work.

Modelled writing is when a teacher writes a passage of text in front of the class. It differs from shared writing in that the teacher does not ask for the input of the class when she or he is writing.

A teacher will carry out a process of 'thinking aloud' when they are modelling writing. Here is an example of a teacher modelling writing a description of the fight between Theseus and the Minotaur in the Greek myth.

The words in bold are the teacher's words and the words in italic are the words written on the board:

Today we're going to write a description of the fight between Theseus and the Minotaur. This is our success criteria:

Learning objective: To write about Theseus's journey into the maze

Success criteria: Describe characters using adjectives and powerful verbs. Use capitals and full stops in the right places.

I'm going to start with a description of Theseus's first impression of the Minotaur:

The Minotaur was an enormous beast.

I want to describe how terrifying he was, so I'm going to mention his claws and teeth:

The Minotaur was an enormous beast, with horribly sharp claws and teeth like razors.

It could be a good idea to include the sound and smell of the Minotaur to give the reader a really good impression of him:

He was wheezing and grunting and his breath was foul from the stench of the humans he had eaten for breakfast.

Now I think Theseus would want to quickly attack the Minotaur, so I'm going to go straight into the action:

Theseus did not waste a minute: he plunged his sword straight into the Minotaur's neck.

Now I need to think about the Minotaur's reaction:

The Minotaur screamed a terrible scream, louder than a hundred men. Blood gushed from his neck in a bright, red arc.

Let's read over what I've written so far:

The Minotaur was an enormous beast, with horribly sharp claws and teeth like razors. He was wheezing and grunting and his breath was foul from the stench of the humans he had eaten for breakfast. Theseus did not waste a minute: he plunged his sword straight into the Minotaur's neck. The Minotaur screamed a terrible scream, louder than a hundred men. Blood gushed from his neck in a bright, red arc.

At this point, the teacher might ask the children to look back at the success criteria to check that it has been adhered to. Children might be asked to look for adjectives and powerful verbs to check that they are there. They might be asked to look at the punctuation and check it is correct.

The children might then be asked if they could improve this writing in any way. The teacher might underline a sentence and then ask the children to discuss how they could improve it with a partner and then re-write it on their whiteboards.

Multi-clause sentences

Simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences... can you identify the different types of sentence construction your child will learn in KS1 and KS2? Our parent-friendly guide explains how your child will be taught to put grammar into practice in the classroom.

A sentence is a grammatical unit made up of one or more words (*Go!* is a sentence, as is *The cat sat on the mat.*). Sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation point.

What is a simple sentence?

Sentences can be structured in different ways.

A simple sentence has a subject and ONLY ONE verb:

The girl sprinted after the tiger.

The cat purred.

Simple sentence = subject + ONE verb

What is a compound sentence?

A compound sentence is formed when you join two main clauses with a connective. In a compound sentence the clauses are linked by coordinating conjunctions / connectives (and, but, so, or).

I like bananas and I like grapes.

Zoe can be rude at times but she is a nice girl.

Compound sentence = main clause + connective + main clause

What is a complex or multi-clause sentence?

Complex sentences can also be referred to as **multi-clause sentences.**

A complex sentence is formed when you join a main clause and a subordinate clause with a connective. A subordinate clause relies on a main clause to make sense.

The connectives in complex sentences are subordinating conjunctions and they tell us about the order or the place in which things happened or specify a cause or effect relationship between events. Connectives used in complex sentences include after, although, as, because, if, since, unless, when.

I love roast potatoes, although my mum prefers them mashed.

You need to prepare for the spelling test tomorrow if you want to get all your spellings right.

The big dog barked whenever I knocked on the door.

Complex sentence = main clause + connective + subordinate clause

Complex sentences can also be constructed by including relative clauses (which are subordinate clauses), for example:

Tom, who liked to read, settled down happily with his new book.

How are children taught sentence construction in KS1?

Children are not necessarily taught compound and complex sentences explicitly in KS1, but teachers will encourage children to notice the use of connectives in texts they are reading and how they make the writing more effective.

In **Year 1**, children need to start joining parts of sentences (clauses) using 'and'. For example:

There was a monster in my room and he was roaring.

In **Year 2**, children start using subordination, which occurs in a complex sentence. So instead of writing: *I wanted some ice-cream* they need to expand this using the connectives and, or and but, to something like:

I wanted some ice-cream but there was none.

How is sentence construction taught in KS2?

Children continue to use compound and complex sentences in KS2. They will be expected to use more and more varied and sophisticated connectives.

In **Years 3 and 4** they are expected to use when, if, because and although.

In **Years 5 and 6** they are expected to use meanwhile, therefore, however, consequently and other connectives.

By Year 6 children are expected to recognise, understand and be able to explain what simple, compound and complex sentences are, as this is likely to come up in the KS2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test.

Teachers use a variety of methods to help children improve their sentence structure:

- Teachers often put lists of connectives up around the classroom to encourage children to remember to use them in their writing.

- They may also play classroom games, saying sentences out loud using connectives. An example of this is to give children the half-sentence:
I would like to get a dog, however...
and then ask them to repeat it, adding their own half of the sentence, for example:
I would like to get a dog, however my mum won't let me.

- Teachers will also model the use of compound and complex sentences on the board when they are drafting example text for the children.

- When a teacher marks a draft piece of writing, they may, in their marking, draw the child's attention to how two simple sentences could be joined by a connective, or how one simple sentence could be expanded by a connective and a second clause.

Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
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Mystery text

Mystery text explained for parents, with examples of how children might work on crime stories in KS2 and suggestions of great mystery story books for children aged 8 to 12.

A mystery story is one in which an **unexplained event has occurred.** The usual format for a mystery story is one where a crime is committed and then a detective has to work out who committed the crime and how (and possibly why!).

Mystery stories are a great way to get children interested in fiction: in a good mystery story, suspense is built up throughout the text, making the reader want to keep on reading. **Mystery stories are also a good platform for discussing characters' behaviour and motives** with children.

Mystery text in primary school

In Year 3, there is a **suggested literacy unit called 'Adventure and Mystery**'. In this unit, children will start by reading a mystery story and discussing the characters and setting. There may be a moral dilemma in the story which children need to discuss. All of this helps children to enhance their inference skills and their ability to empathise with characters.

They will then look at the sentence structure of the story, including sentences types and lengths. They may look at how sentence structure is used for effect; for example, the author might use a series of short sentences in a particularly scary part of the story.

Children will carry out activities related to the story: they may be asked to write a letter from one character to another or they may do some drama related to the story.

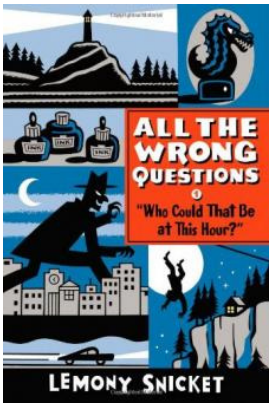
Eventually, children will start to think about writing their own mystery story. They will look again at the structure of a mystery story. For example: the original story may start with a murder and three suspects. The next part of the story might involve a detective interviewing the suspects and then finding a clue that leads him to discover

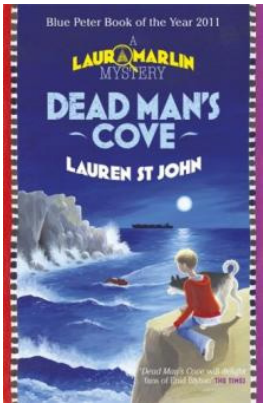
who the murderer is. The teacher will encourage their class to use a similar structure to plan their own story. Usually they will be given a writing frame with prompts to remind them how to structure their story.

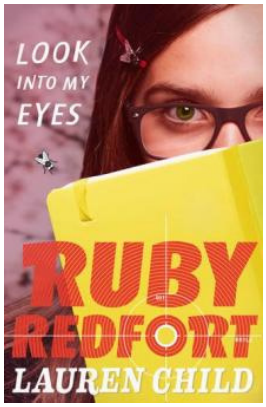
Children will then start to draft their story, remembering to include good description and dialogue. The teacher will spend time showing them how to do this effectively. They will work on editing their initial drafts and re-writing them. Finally, they will write their stories up in neat. Teachers usually try to find attractive ways of presenting finished stories, such as making booklets for the children to write in, or carrying out an art lesson where children can paint pictures to go with their stories. These activities help children to value what they are doing and encourage them to work hard to produce a really engaging finished product.

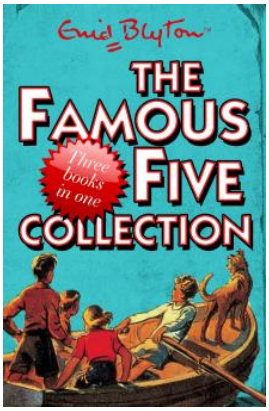
Mystery stories for primary-school children

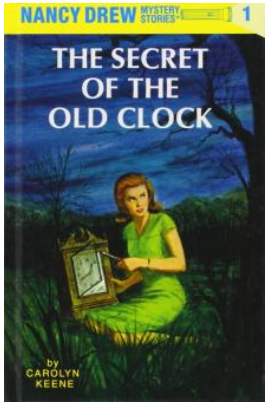
Recommended by teachers and other children and guaranteed to keep kids reading under the bedcovers long past bedtime...

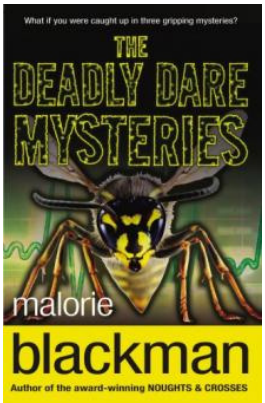


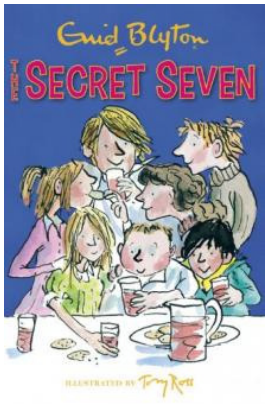


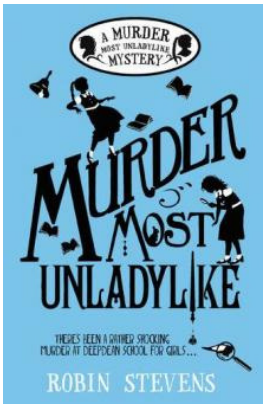












Myths and legends

Myths and legends are taught as part of the primary-school curriculum; as well as reading them your child will probably write their own version. We explain what parents need to know to support learning at home.

A myth is a traditional, ancient story that is fictional. Myths were often written to explain natural phenomena and quite often involved gods and fantasy creatures.

A legend is a story which takes place within human history. Legends are widely believed to be rooted in the truth, but will have evolved over time and taken on fictional elements.

Children will usually study at least one of the following historical periods during their time at primary school: Ancient Greece, the Romans or Ancient Egypt. These are some of the myths and legends they may come across within each topic:

Ancient Greece: myths in primary-school literacy

Persephone and the Pomegranate Seeds

This myth involves Persephone and her mother Demeter, the goddess of harvest. Persephone is snatched by the god of the Underworld, Hades. She must not eat anything in the Underworld otherwise she will have to stay there forever. While there, she eats six seeds of a pomegranate. As a result, she has to spend six months of every year in the Underworld and six months on Earth. This myth was a way of explaining why we have a change in seasons over the year – autumn and winter are when Persephone is in the Underworld and spring and summer are when she is re-united with her mother on Earth.

Theseus and the Minotaur

A king keeps a Minotaur (half bull, half man) at the centre of a maze. He has to feed the Minotaur humans in order to keep it happy. Theseus bravely agrees to go and kill the Minotaur. He manages this, but then he betrays the woman who helped him, Ariadne. As he arrives home, he forgets to put a white sail up to show his father he is still alive. His father assumes the worst and kills himself.

Arachne the Spinner

A woman named Arachne is an accomplished spinner. She boasts that she is better than the gods at spinning. The goddess Athena challenges her to a spinning competition. Arachne spins a tapestry depicting the gods getting drunk and looking silly. As a punishment, Athena turns Arachne into a spider. This myth is supposed to explain where spiders come from.

Ancient Rome: legends in primary-school literacy

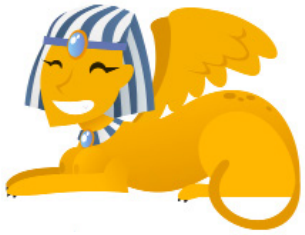
Romulus and Remus

This legend explains the story of Rhea, who gave birth to twins Romulus and Remus. The gods intended to harm her sons, so she set them adrift in the river. A she-wolf found them and brought them up. As adults, they decided they wanted to become kings. They built a city but quarrelled about how it should be run. Romulus picked up a rock and killed his brother so that he could rule the city, Rome, alone.

Ancient Egypt: myths in primary-school literacy

Isis and Osiris

Osiris was believed to be the king of Egypt and had a wife called Isis and a son called Horus. He is usurped by his brother Seth, who kills him by tricking him to get into a casket, which he seals and then throws into the river Nile. Isis recovers her



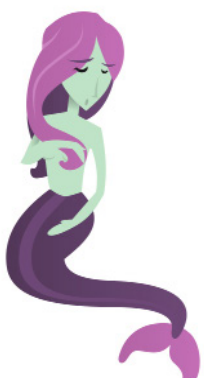
husband's body, at which point Seth flies into a rage and chops it into pieces, so that Osiris cannot travel to the Afterlife. Finally, Horus overcomes Seth and manages to rule Egypt. This myth was sometimes used to explain why the banks of the Nile would flood – this was believed to be caused by the tears Isis cried on learning about her husband's death.

When children are taught a myth or legend, they will usually be read an illustrated version of the story that is written for their age group. They will carry out a number of activities to deepen their understanding of the text, for example:

- Drawing a story mountain to get an idea of the structure of the story
- Making notes on a spider diagram about a particular character
- Writing a letter from one character to another
- In pairs, improvising a conversation between two characters in the story
- Writing a diary entry as one character in the story

Once teachers feel that the text has been thoroughly explored, they will guide the children in **writing their own version of the myth**. This involves planning the story, brainstorming characters and setting and then writing a draft of the story. If the story they have studied involves a hero and a mythical beast (like 'Theseus and the Minotaur') teachers will usually encourage children to follow this formula for their story, but change it according to their imagination, for example: their hero may be female and their mythical beast may be half-fish, half-man and live in the sea.

Teachers will always encourage children to use as much description in their stories as possible. They may be shown sections from the original myth they read and asked to think about how the writing is effective (for example: use of similes, use of adverbs) and how they might write their story in a similar way.



Non-chronological reports

Find out how your child is taught to read and write non-chronological reports in primary school.

A non-chronological report is a non-fiction report which is not written in time order.

All of the following information texts are written in time order:

• Explanation - this is a text about a process which happens or happened in a certain order, such as the water cycle or the events of a battle.

• Recount - this is a time ordered re-telling of something that has happened in real life, such as a school trip or the life of Gandhi.

• Instructions - this is a text including numbered points on how to do something, such as cook a meal or put up some shelves.

A non-chronological report is focused on a single topic and includes various facts about this topic. Children may be asked to read and / or write non-chronological reports about a country, animal, religion, planet or sport.

Working with non-chronological reports in primary school

Teachers would start by showing children a range of reports and asking them to look at the features. **Features of a non-chronological report** include some of the following:

• An eye-catching heading in a large font

• An introductory paragraph

• Text split up into paragraphs and each paragraph on a different aspect of the subject

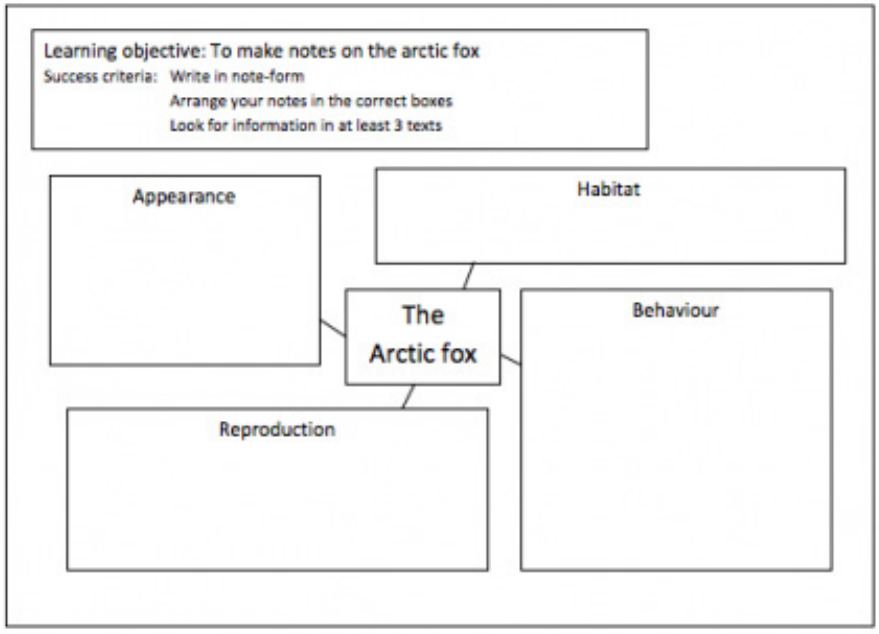
• Subheadings for each paragraph

• Usually written in present tense

• Pictures of the subject

- Captions under each picture to explain what is in the image
- Diagrams with labels
- Lists of facts in bullet points
- Graphs or charts showing information about the subject
- Boxes containing interesting individual facts to grab the attention of the reader
- Technical vocabulary in bold, possibly with a glossary at the end

Children will spend some time text-marking the features on different reports and comparing how they are set out. The next step will be for children to choose or be given a topic to research. They may be given a spider-diagram to make notes on:



Children will need to draft each paragraph of their report. Teachers will then encourage them to edit and improve their writing. The teacher may mark the work and write suggestions, or children may be put into pairs to edit each other's work.

Children then need to think about the layout of their report. They need to think about all the above features and what they would like to include. A teacher may encourage children to draw up a plan of how they would like their report to look. Children then produce their reports in 'neat', writing up their improved paragraphs and including eye-catching headings and pictures.

Non-fiction

Non-fiction texts are read, studied and written throughout the primary-school years. Our parents' guide covers instruction texts, recounts, information and explanation texts, persuasive writing and argument texts and explains what you need to know to support your child.

A non-fiction text is any text that is not a story. Each year at primary school, children will focus on a range of narrative, non-fiction and poetry texts in literacy.

Non-fiction texts studied at primary school include instruction texts, recounts, information texts, explanation texts, persuasive texts, biography, journalistic writing and argument texts.

Instruction texts

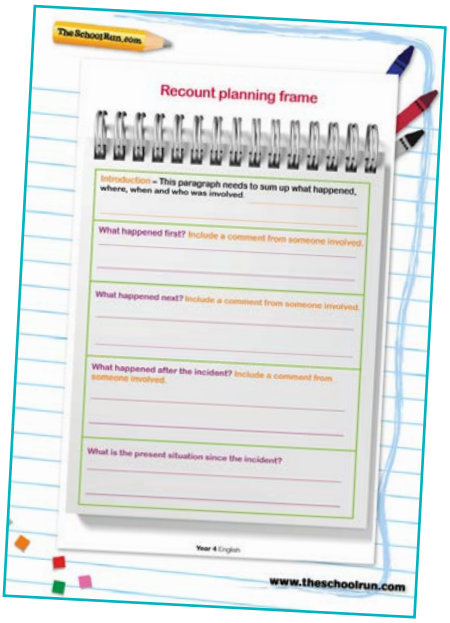
An instruction text is a text such as a recipe or manual. This will include a 'You will need' list (ingredients or tools) and then numbered points on how to carry out a certain activity. They include imperative ('bossy') verbs, such as 'put', 'stick', 'stir', etc.

Recounts

A **recount text** is a piece of writing that explains an event that has happened. A diary entry is a recount text, as is a newspaper article explaining an event that has happened. They are usually written in the past tense and include the use of time connectives.

Information texts / Non-chronological reports

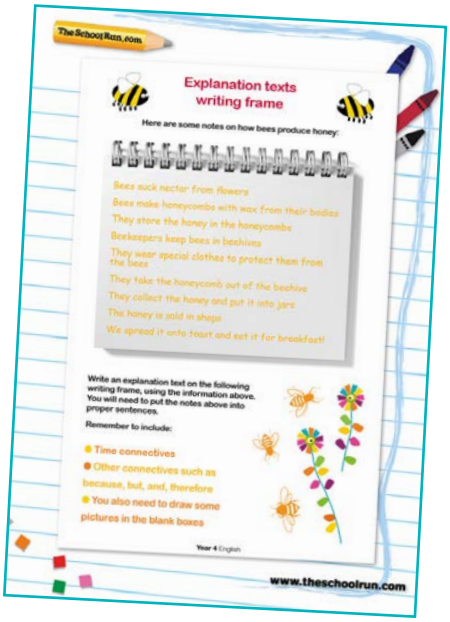
An **information text** is a text giving information about a particular thing such as Ancient Egypt, recycling or volcanoes. **Information texts are sometimes called non-chronological reports,** because they are reporting information about something without mentioning the order in which it happened.



Explanation texts

An **explanation text** is one which describes a process, for example: the water cycle, how bees

make honey or how a car is made. They are usually written in the present tense, with numbered points and diagrams or pictures to make the process clear.



Persuasive texts

Persuasive texts can take a number of forms, for example: an advert persuading you to buy some chocolate, a poster encouraging people to stop smoking or a travel brochure enticing the reader to go to a particular country.

Biography and autobiography

An **autobiography** is someone's account of their own life; a **biography** is a writer's account of someone else's life (usually someone famous). Writing of biographies in primary school is usually linked to the theme the class are studying.

Journalistic writing

Children will read **news reports** and look at the features such as headlines, pictures, captions, quotations, paragraphs, formal tone, etc. They will then be asked to write their own newspaper report, usually related to a theme they are studying.

Argument texts

An **argument text** is a text written about a subject, where the writer is either 'for' or 'against' the subject (a pros and cons text, in other words). For example, you could write an argument text for or against zoos, smoking, school uniform or e-readers. Argument texts include facts and research and are usually written using formal language.

When studying non-fiction texts, children will usually be given a range of texts that fall within the genre of text they are studying. They will be encouraged to look at the features of these texts and how they are set out. They will then be encouraged to gather their own information and start drafting this into a similar text. Teachers will support children with the editing and re-writing process until they are ready to write their 'neat' piece of writing.

Nouns

Get common nouns and concrete nouns clear in your mind and understand proper nouns and pronouns - our simple guide explains everything primary-school parents need to know about nouns and how to form the plural forms correctly.

A noun is a naming word. It is **a thing, a person, an animal or a place.**

Common and proper nouns

A **proper noun** is the name of a person or place, such as Susan or America. Proper nouns start with a capital letter.

A **common noun** describes a class of objects and does not have a capital letter, for example car, animal or planet.

Concrete and abstract nouns

A **concrete noun** is a person, place or object you can physically touch, such as Dad, London or a table. Concrete nouns include proper nouns and common nouns.

An **abstract noun** is a thing that cannot be touched or seen, such as education, love, joy or success.

Singular and plural

'Dog', 'balloon' and 'table' are nouns in the **singular**. This means there is only **one of them.**

If these nouns were in the plural, it would mean there were more than one of them. An 's' would be added to the end to make the words 'dogs', 'balloons' and 'tables'.

When you need to make any of the words with these endings plural, you add -es to the singular word:

-s	-ch	-sh	-tch	-x
bus	church lunch	brush dish	match watch	fox box

-f	-fe
thief → thieves scarf → scarves wolf → wolves half → halves calf → calves	wife → wives knife → knives life → lives

Forming the plural of nouns follows specific rules:

• If a noun ends in a 'y', to make the noun plural, the 'y' is removed and 'ies' is added: 'baby' becomes 'babies' and 'party' becomes 'parties'

• If a noun ends in 'f' or 'fe', to make the noun plural the 'f' or 'fe' turns into 'ves': 'calf' becomes 'calves' and 'knife' becomes 'knives'

Collective nouns

A **collective noun** is a noun used to describe a group of something. For example:

• the word 'herd' is a collective noun to describe a group of animals

• the word 'choir' is a collective noun to describe a group of singers

Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word used to replace a noun. Examples of pronouns are: he, she, it, they. Possessive pronouns such as his, hers, their, your are used so that we don't have to keep repeating the noun.

For example:

John put John's bag on John's peg. John walked to John's classroom.

If you use pronouns the sentence reads much better:

John put his bag on his peg. He walked to his classroom.

Learning about nouns in primary school

In **Key Stage 1**, children learn that nouns representing people and places (proper nouns) are written with capital letters. They are also expected to start replacing their nouns with pronouns and use the plural form of nouns, simply by adding 's' to a word.

Later on, they will move onto learning how to make words ending 'y', 'f' and 'fe' into plurals using the correct spelling patterns. They may also learn about collective nouns.

In **Year 2** they'll be forming nouns by using suffixes, and by **Year 3** forming nouns using a variety of prefixes.

From **Year 4** they'll identify and learn to expand **noun phrases.**

Objects and subjects

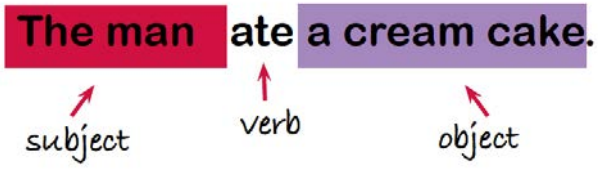
Subjects and objects in sentences, plus subject-verb agreement – primary-school grammar terms explained for parents, with examples.

Many sentences contain subjects, verbs and objects.

The **subject** is usually **the thing or person who is carrying out an action.**

The **object** is the **thing or person that is involved in an action, but does not carry it out.**

In the following sentence:



the man is the subject because he is doing something (eating a cream cake). The word 'ate' is the verb. The cream cake is the object.

What is subject-verb agreement?

Singular subjects need singular verbs (a **dog** loves a bone); plural subjects need plural verbs (**dogs** love a bone). This is called subject-verb agreement.

Tricky cases to watch out for:

Pronouns such as **everyone** and **everybody** are always singular, so they **need a singular verb.** (*Everyone likes ice-cream*, or *Everybody went to the park*.)

Pronouns like **all** or **some** can be plural (if the people or things referred to by the pronoun can be counted: some boys, all children) or singular (if the people or things referred to by the pronoun cannot be counted but are seen as a singular quantity: some sugar, all the flour).

None can be used as a singular or plural pronoun (*None of them is... / None of them are...*).

How are children taught about subject and object in the classroom?

Since May 2013 children in Year 6 have taken a **KS2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test** as part of their English SATs. Prior to this, teachers did not usually teach primary-school children about subjects and objects, but now it has become more important for them to know these grammatical terms.

This is an example question involving subject-verb agreement from the 2013 KS2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling past paper (download SATs papers for free from TheSchoolRun):

Tick the two sentences where the **subject** and **verb** agree.

	Tick **two**.
Many of my friends loves eating pizza.	☐
Everyone is going to the library.	☐
Children under 16 are not allowed to see this film.	☐
The man live near the station.	☐
Boys is sitting in the chair.	☐

1 mark

The question could equally be worded: 'Tick the sentence which is grammatically correct', however the question above requires children to actually understand what a subject is, what a verb is and the concept of them both 'agreeing'.

In this case, a child would need to recognise that the second and third sentences each have a subject which agrees with the verb.

Children are formally taught to identify the subject and object in a sentence in Year 6 (as part of the national curriculum revised in 2014).

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a word that names a sound, but also sounds like that sound. Find out how teachers explain onomatopoeia to school children and how to encourage your child to use it to improve their writing.

Onomatopoeia is a word that names a sound, but also sounds like that sound. For example:

boom, honk, pop, crack, cuckoo, crack, splat, tweet, zoom, sizzle, whizz, buzz, hiss, rip

How is onomatopeia taught in the classroom?

Teachers will sometimes ask children to look for onomatopoeia in poetry and discuss how effective it is. They may encourage children to use words similar to those above in their stories and poems. A teacher may show the children a poem like the following:

The Noisy House
The egg goes crack
The yolk goes splat
The car goes boom
The plane goes zoom
The gas goes hiss
The dryer goes whizz

They may encourage them to find the onomatopoeia in the poem. They may also talk about the **rhyme scheme** of the poem (the fact that each pair of lines rhyme).

Children may then be asked to think about their own poem. They may be asked to list (and maybe draw) all the things in their house that make a noise and the noises they make, choose the ones they like and write a list poem like the one above. Depending on the age and ability of the children involved, they may be asked to think about writing a rhyming poem, or changing the form of the poem.

Children may also be encouraged to look for onomatopoeia in stories they read.

Paragraphs

Paragraphs are sections of text used to structure writing to make it clear and easy to read. We explain how the use of paragraphs is taught in KS2 and how you can help your child improve their writing by using paragraphs.

A paragraph is a section of writing consisting of one or more sentences grouped together and discussing one main subject.

New paragraphs are either signalled by an indent (where the text starts some way into the line) or by leaving a line blank.

How are paragraphs used?

Paragraphs help to structure text; **every new paragraph starts on a new line.** We start a new paragraph to signal that the person, place, time or topic of the sentences has changed.

In **fiction text**, paragraphs are usually used to mark breaks in time. A new paragraph may also be started if the point of view switches from one character to another.

In a **non-fiction** text, a paragraph is a group of sentences that usually all have one theme in common.

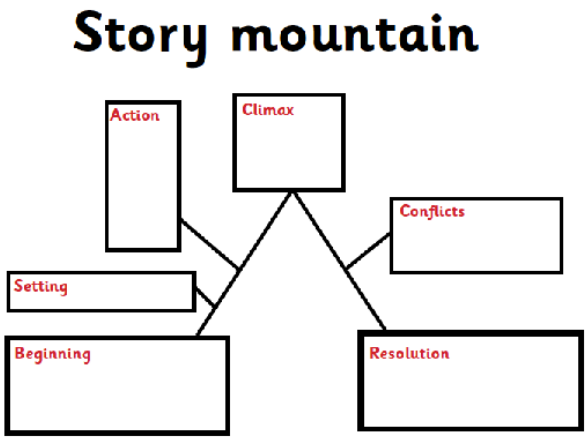
In primary school, texts will often have a five-paragraph structure:

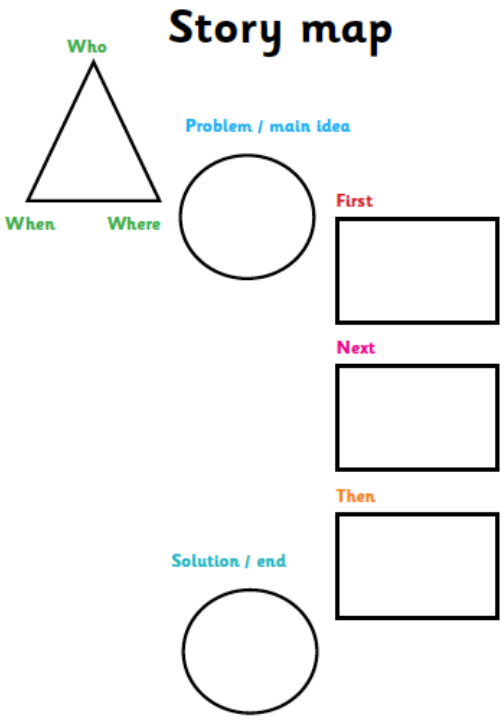
- Paragraph 1 is an introduction
- Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 focus on three specific (and different) points
- Paragraph 5 is a conclusion

When are children taught to use paragraphs?

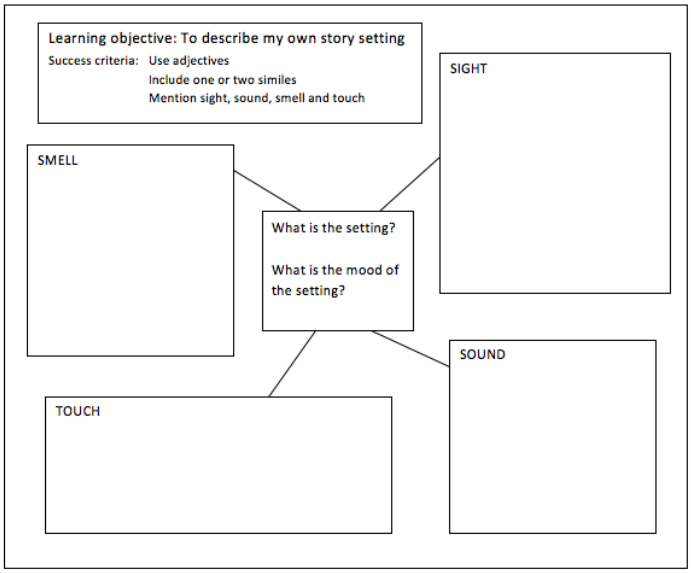
Children start to use paragraphs in Year 3. This is a skill that can often get forgotten by an enthusiastic child desperate to get all their writing down!

A good way to encourage children to use paragraphs in a story is to introduce this idea at the planning stage. **A story map or story mountain** with boxes can help children to think about each paragraph before they start writing:





A good way to encourage children to use paragraphs when writing a non-fiction text is to give them a **spider diagram** with sub-headings for making notes on.



A spider diagram encourages children to **arrange their notes into separate boxes according to theme.** This means that when they come to write their notes up into sentences, they will know that their text needs to be split into four different paragraphs.

Teachers often find that when children write a first draft of their writing they forget to split their writing into paragraphs. This is why writing a first draft is a good idea, as it is a chance to correct and improve the structure of a piece of writing.

Parenthesis

We explain parenthesis and parentheses (or brackets) and how children are introduced to the different ways to add information to a sentence as part of the primary school curriculum.

Parenthesis is a word, phrase, or clause inserted into a sentence to add extra, subordinate or clarifying information. When a parenthesis is removed, the sentence still makes sense on its own.

What are parentheses?

Brackets ( ) are also known as parentheses (parenthesEs) and usually used to show parenthesIs.

Commas and dashes can also be used to show parenthesis.

How does parenthesis work?

The most common way to show parenthesis is to use brackets within a sentence to add information for detail or clarification. What is key to remember is that the sentence to which the parenthesis is being added should make grammatical sense whether the information in the brackets is there or not.

George Washington (the first American President) was born in 1732.

I went to the cinema to meet James (my eldest brother).

I love strawberries (and raspberries) but I'm not keen on blackberries.

For example, *George Washington was born in 1732* makes sense on its own, therefore the brackets have been used correctly. The subordinate, or bracketed, information *the first American President* adds extra detail to the main sentence.

Dashes and commas can also be used in place of brackets to indicate parenthesis; they offer a slightly less formal tone in writing.

I miss seeing Amelia (my best friend from primary school) every day.
I miss seeing Amelia, my best friend from primary school, every day.
I miss seeing Amelia – my best fiend from primary school – every day.

Additional punctuation can be used within brackets, however this isn't usually taught until Year 6. If the information inside the brackets were a full sentence, then a full stop (or suitable alternative) would be required. In the case of a phrase like (oh no!), appropriate punctuation outside the brackets needs to be used as if the bracketed information weren't there.

Derby County lost the play-off finals (oh no!).
After two weeks of SATs revision, the children were disgruntled about their P.E lessons. (Or complete lack of P.E. lessons.)

Brackets are often used in place of commas, so adding commas to bracketed information is redundant and unnecessary. Brackets can even be used within brackets, however this is not taught at primary school.

How is parenthesis taught in primary school?

Before children can add information in parenthesis to their sentences, they need to be familiar with reading that type of sentence. Once they have understood how bracketed information is read aloud slightly differently than the rest of the sentence, identification and writing their own sentences will follow.

Worksheets will often be used the first time children are expected to write brackets, perhaps asking children to add brackets to pre-written sentences.

I lost my phone a Samsung S9 yesterday during football training.
Winston Churchill a British Prime Minister was born in Blenheim Palace.

I lost my phone (a Samsung S9) yesterday during football training.
Winston Churchill (a British Prime Minister) was born in Blenheim Palace.

Children will then progress onto writing their own sentences, usually through the form of shared writing as a class.

When is parenthesis taught in primary school?

Parenthesis is first introduced to children in Year 5 and consolidated further in Year 6.

To reach age-related levels in their writing, children are expected to be able to use brackets, dashes or commas for parenthesis within their writing across a range of text types by the end of Year 6.

In their KS2 English Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test, children may be asked questions related to the correct use of brackets for parenthesis. For example:

> Insert a pair of brackets in the correct place in the sentence below.
>
> Mary read her new book the last in the series in three hours.

Past and present continuous

We use the present continuous and past continuous verb tenses when talking or writing about actions that continue or continued over a period of time. In our parents' guide to the continuous or progressive verb tenses we explain what children are taught in the primary-school classroom.

What are the present continuous (progressive) and past continuous?

A verb tense tells us when the action of state described by the verb happened. The three main verb tenses in English are the present, the past, and the future.

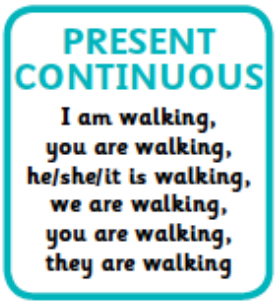
The **present tense** is made up of:

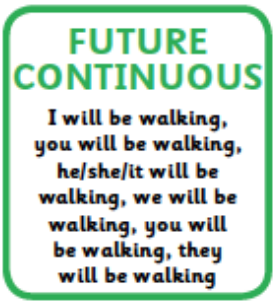
- simple present / present simple
- present continuous / present progressive
- present perfect

The **past tense** is made up of:

- simple past / past simple
- past continuous / past progressive
- past perfect

The present continuous and past continuous tenses (also called present progressive and past progressive) are used when we are describing actions that continue for a period of time in the present or in the past.





To form the present continuous and past continuous we use the present / past tense of the verb to be and the present participle of the main verb (I am walking / I was walking).

The present continuous / present progressive explained

The **present continuous** tense is used to describe **an action that is happening at the moment of speaking:**

I am leaving work.

Present continuous / progressive

I am
You are
He / she / it is
We are
You are
They are

Present tense of to be

\+ _____ing

Present participle of main verb

The past continuous / past progressive explained

The past continuous is used for a continuous action in the past, for example:

I was working hard when the telephone interrupted me.

Everyone was shouting.

They were always arguing.

Past continuous / progressive

I was
You were
He / she / it was
We were
You were
They were

Past tense of to be

\+ _____ing

Present participle of main verb

What are children taught about present and past continuous in KS2?

Children will be introduced to the progressive tenses as part of their KS2 grammar learning. Rather confusingly, these tenses can be referred to as continuous or progressive!

What questions should children expect in the Y6 grammar test?

Children may come across questions similar to the following:

Tick to show which sentence uses the past progressive.

After Dad had mowed the lawn, he had a nap.

Archie had learnt his spellings.

Francesca was learning a song for the school play.

Tom found his maths too difficult.

Answer: *Francesca was learning a song for the school play.*

How do teachers teach the present and past continuous?

• A good way to help children learn tenses is to ask them to write a few sentences in that tense. For example, they might describe what they did yesterday in the past continuous.

• Teachers may give children word cards (for example: going, walking, fishing, sailing and cooking). Children may be asked to put these words into sentences containing the present continuous.

• A good game to help with learning this tense is: 'You are... but I am...'. Children play this in pairs. One child says: 'You are...' and then gives an action such as 'digging the garden'. The other child has to mime this. The first child then says 'but I am' and thinks of a different action such as 'baking a cake' which they then mime.

Past and present perfect

We use the present perfect and past perfect verb tenses when talking or writing about actions that are completed by the present or by a specific moment in the past or future. In our parents' guide to the perfect verb tenses we explain what children are taught in the primary-school classroom as part of the grammar curriculum.

A verb tense tells us when the action or state described by the verb happened. The three main verb tenses in English are the present, the past, and the future.

The **present** tense is made up of:

- simple present / present simple
- present continuous / present progressive
- present perfect

The **past** tense is made up of:

- simple past / past simple
- past continuous / past progressive
- past perfect

The 'perfect' tenses (present perfect, past perfect and future perfect) are usually used to talk about actions that are completed by the present or a particular point in the past or future.

PRESENT PERFECT

I have walked,
you have walked,
he/she/it has walked,
we have walked,
you have walked,
they have walked

PAST PERFECT

I had walked,
you had walked,
he/she/it had walked,
we had walked,
you had walked,
they had walked

FUTURE PERFECT

I will have walked,
you will have walked,
he/she/it will have walked, we will have walked, you will have walked, they will have walked

To form the perfect tense we use the present / past / future form of the verb to have and the past participle of the main verb (I have walked / I had walked / I would have walked).

The present perfect explained

We use the **present perfect** tense **to talk about our experiences in a way that does not refer to when they happened:**

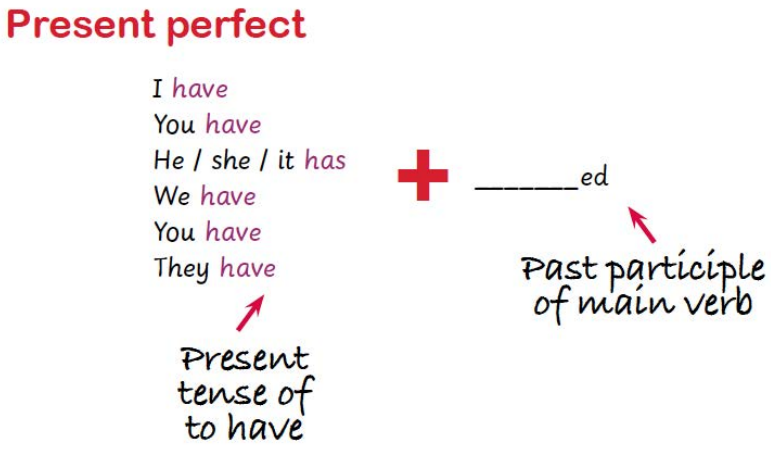
I have never been abroad.

We also use this tense **to talk about an action which started in the past and is continuous up until now:**

I have been a doctor for ten years.

We also use this tense **to talk about something that has happened in the past but has a result in the present:**

I have lost my passport. (The result in the present is that I don't have my passport.)



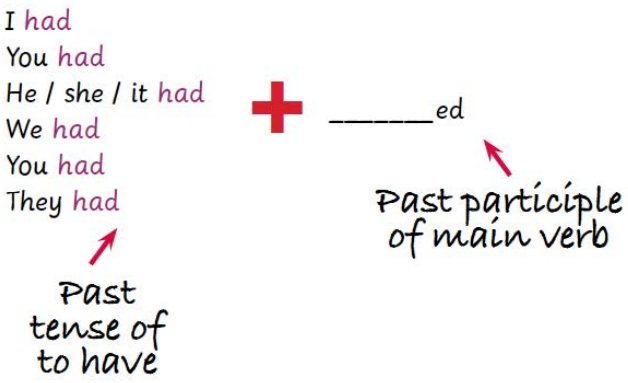
The past perfect explained

The **past perfect** is used **to talk about an event that was completed in the past before something else happened:**

I had just finished cooking the meal when my guests arrived.

I didn't want to watch the film, as I had already seen it.

Past perfect



What are children taught about verb tenses at primary school?

In **Year 2**, children are taught to **use the present and past tense consistently**.

In **Year 3**, they are expected to use the present perfect form of verbs instead of the simple past (*He has gone on holiday* rather than *He went on holiday*).

Children in Year 5 and Year 6 will be taught about the present perfect and past perfect tenses. In the KS2 grammar assessment children may come across a question similar to this one:

> **Underline the verb form that is in the present perfect in the passage below:**
>
> John is eleven years old. He is good at science and has wanted to be a doctor for years. He is currently enjoying learning about the life cycle of a frog.

Answer: *has wanted*

How do teachers teach children about the present perfect and past perfect?

- One way to help children get used to various tenses is to give them sentences written in the different tenses and encourage children to sort them into groups.
- Children may also be asked to look through their reading books to see if they can find sentences that are written in these tenses.
- Children may be asked to write their own sentences using both the tenses.

Personification

In KS2 children often analyse figurative language when reading poetry and fiction. Personification, or giving a non-living object human characteristics to describe it, is a common technique children will study and learn to use in their own writing.

Children in Key Stage 2 start to think about how writers use **figurative language** to create effect in their writing. One type of figurative language is **personification**, which is **giving an object human characteristics** (emotions, sensations, speech, physical movements).

Examples of personification for children

The cruel waves crashed mercilessly and swallowed the swimmer.

Here, the writer describes the waves using human attributes, 'cruel' and 'merciless'. The waves are given a human physical process, swallowing, when waves cannot literally swallow something.

Personification is also used in everyday sayings, for example:

Those flowers are crying out for water.

This expression is designed to tell us that the flowers need watering, but it implies the flowers have a voice. It also makes the sentence quite emotional, perhaps as a way of conveying urgency (someone needs to do something about the flowers quickly!).

London is a city that never sleeps.

This expression tells us that London is a city that is lively all the time. A city cannot literally be awake or asleep, but the expression tells us something about the people who live in the city and their activities, and how they characterise a city.

When are children taught personification?

Teachers will start to mention personification to children in **KS2** (around Year 4 or 5).

Personification is usually taught through poetry. A teacher might start by showing the children a poem (see the following page).

Night

Night smooths her dark hands over the green landscape,
Turning it black.
She opens her eyelid
To reveal a shining moon.
She breathes cool air onto the land
And fills the sky with a bright pinboard of stars.

Night drops a cover of sleep over a multitude of people.
She deposits dreams under their eyelids
And makes their bodies fit for another day.

Nights allows dark deeds to go unnoticed,
She colludes with criminals
And covers their acts
With a cloak of secrecy.

Children might be asked to give examples of personification in the poem.

- Night is often referred to as ‘she’ in this poem.
- Night is given body parts, such as hands and eyelids, and is said to ‘breathe’.
- Some verbs are used to suggest that night has intentions, such as: ‘colludes’ and ‘allows’.

Children would probably need to study a variety of poems before they would be ready to start **writing their own personification poem**. A teacher would either think of an object to encourage the whole class to write about, or they might allow children their own choice. They might prompt the children with questions about all the different aspects of a human being and how you could relate this to the object.

- Which parts of the object could you compare to human body parts?
- What feelings could you give the object that make it sound human?
- What actions could the object carry out that are similar to a person’s action?

Children might brainstorm these ideas on a spider diagram and then start drafting their own poem.

Persuasive texts

Persuasive text is written to make the reader do something. Children are taught this form of non-fiction text in Key Stage 2; we explain the key features of persuasive text and how you can support your child's learning.

Persuasive texts aim to make the reader do something. They are non-fiction texts.

Persuasive texts can take a number of forms, for example an **advert** persuading you to buy some chocolate, a **poster** encouraging people to stop smoking or a **travel brochure** enticing the reader to go to a particular country. Persuasive text is a form of non-fiction text that is usually taught in Key Stage 2.

Persuasive text often includes:

- repeated words
- alliterative words
- emotional language
- a strong argument
- rhetorical questions
- humour
- colourful and eye-catching fonts / capitalised words

Persuasive writing in practice

Teachers tend to teach a unit on persuasive texts that is related to a theme children are studying that term. For example, they might be teaching the children about the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece. Children might learn facts about the Games with a view to designing their own poster encouraging people to come.

To familiarise children with the kind of text they want them to eventually produce, the teacher might give the children a range of texts encouraging people to attend various current sporting events. They would look at how the **layout** of these texts might be persuasive, for example: bright colours, exciting pictures and eye-catching fonts.

They would then look at the **words and phrases** used to persuade people to attend the events. These might include: 'exciting', 'fantastic', 'once in a lifetime', 'limited period only', 'tickets selling fast'. There might be some kind of **incentive** to buy quickly: 'Book before Friday and get two tickets for the price of one'.

Using their knowledge of the Ancient Greek Olympic Games, they would then plan their own poster, encouraging people to come to the Games. They would need to think about all the features they had studied and decide how they were going to lay out their poster and what they would write on it. They might do some draft writing which they would then edit with the help of their teacher or peers, before producing their neat version.

How are children taught persuasive writing in KS2?

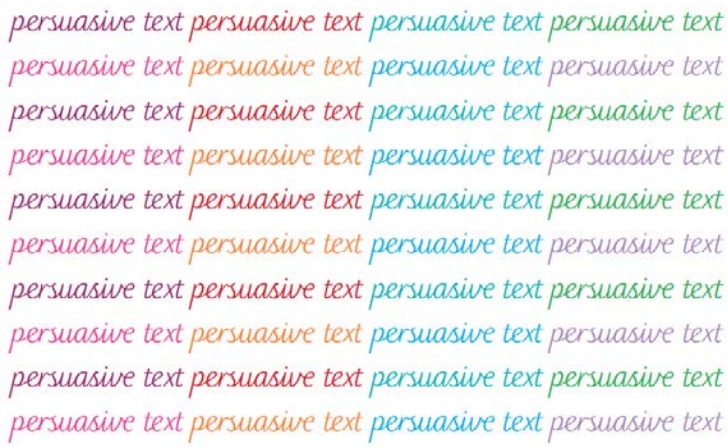
The literacy framework sets out a number of units on persuasive writing in KS2 that most state school teachers follow.

In **Year 3, persuasive writing is linked to information texts**, so that a teacher will choose a topic to study and then will show children how to write persuasively about this topic.

In **Year 4**, the suggested persuasive writing unit is for children to write their own persuasive **film review.**

In **Year 5**, children may be taught how to **write a letter** to a certain person (of choice) to persuade them on an important issue.

In **Year 6**, persuasive writing is often linked to one of the suggested poetry units.



Phonemes

The smallest unit of sound is called a phoneme and your child will be taught about these as part of their phonics learning journey. We explain how the teacher will explain phonemes and how you can help your child when they are starting to put sounds together at home.

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound. This chart shows all the phonemes used when speaking English.

s sat	t tap	p pan	n nose	m mat	a ant	e egg	i ink	o otter
g goat	d dog	c k click	r run	h hat	u up	ai rain	ee knee	igh light
b bus	f farm	l lolly	j jam	v van	oa boat	oo cook	oo boot	ar star
w wish	x axe	y yell	z zap	qu quill	or fork	ur burn	ow now	oi boil
ch chin	sh ship	th think	th the	ng sing	ear near	air stair	ure sure	er writer

Phoneme learning in Reception and KS1

Children will be taught the individual sounds of each letter of the alphabet in Reception. They will then start to put these sounds together, to make short words, such as cat, nap, pin, tap, etc. This is called blending sounds.

They will learn that each of these words have three distinct sounds (phonemes). For example, cat has the three sounds: /c/ /a/ and /t/.

In phonics we learn to read the “pure sound” of a phoneme, rather than letter names. For example, the sound /s/ is pronounced ‘ssssss’ and not ‘suh’ or ‘es’. Learning to read pure sounds makes it much easier for children to blend sounds together.

They will also move onto words containing **consonant clusters** (two consonants placed together) such as *trap* (tr is a consonant cluster) or *bump* (mp is a consonant

cluster). Both these words each contain four phonemes; although consonant clusters involve letters being 'clustered' together, you can still hear the two separate sounds.

They will then start to learn that a word could have a sound in it that is made up of two letters, for example:
boat
is made up of three phonemes: /b/ at the start, /oa/ in the middle and /t/ at the end.

The middle sound /oa/ is made up of two letters, so this is called a **digraph. A digraph is a phoneme (single sound) that is made up of two letters.** The digraph above, /oa/, is a **vowel digraph,** because it is made up of two vowels.

A digraph could be made up of consonants, for example:
chip
The /ch/ in chip is a **consonant digraph**; two letters make up one single phoneme.

A single sound can also be made up of three letters, and this is called a trigraph. For example:
light
The /igh/ in this word is **one sound that is made up of three letters**, so this is a trigraph.

Practical phonemes practice

Children will often be asked to **split words up into sounds** (they may not need to use the word phoneme). For example, if they can't read the word train they may be asked to sound it out, possibly underlining the sounds /t/ /r/ /ai/ /n/ so they are made aware of how to split a word up to be able to say the sounds out loud.

They may also be given **word cards or interlinking cubes that have individual phonemes on them and then be asked to make them into words.**

For example: they may be given the following cards:

f r b / n t s / ai oo ea

With these cards they can make a variety of words, such as fair, brain, rain, train, stain, boot, foot, root, soot, fear, bear, tear. Children gradually learn that letters and pairs or groups of letters (graphemes) do not always make the same sound. For example: 'ea' makes one sound in 'fear' and another 'bear'.

Phonics

Sort your phonemes from your graphemes, decoding from encoding and digraphs from trigraphs with our guide to phonics teaching. Our step-by-step explanation takes you through the different stages of phonics learning, what your child will be expected to learn and the vocabulary you need to know.

Phonics is a method of **teaching children to read by linking sounds** (phonemes) a**nd the symbols that represent them** (graphemes, or letter groups). Phonics is the learning-to-read method used in primary schools in the UK today.

Phonics learning step 1: decoding

Children are taught letter sounds in Reception. This involves thinking about what sound a word starts with, saying the sound out loud and then recognising how that sound is represented by a letter. The aim is for children to be able to **see a letter and then say the sound it represents out loud.** This is called **decoding.**

Some phonics programmes start children off by learning the letters s, a, t, n, i, p first. This is because once they know each of those letter sounds, they can then be arranged into a variety of different words (sat, tip, pin, nip, tan, tin, sip, etc.).

Phonics learning step 2: blending

Children then need to go from saying the individual sounds of each letter, to being able to **blend the sounds and say the whole word.** This can be a big step for many children and takes time.

While children are learning to say the sounds of letters out loud, they will also begin to learn to **write these letters (encoding).** They will be taught where they need to start with each letter and how the letters need to be formed in relation to each other. **Letters (or groups of letters) that represent phonemes (sounds) are called graphemes**.

Phonics learning step 3: decoding CVC words

Children will focus on decoding (reading) three-letter words arranged consonant, vowel, consonant (CVC words). They will learn other letter sounds, such as the consonants g, b, d, h and the remaining vowels e, o, u. They might be given letter cards to put together to make CVC words which they will be asked to say out loud.

Phonics learning step 4: decoding consonant clusters in CCVC and CVCC words

Children will also learn about **consonant clusters: two consonants located together in a word**, such as tr, cr, st, lk, pl. Children will learn to read a range of CCVC words (consonant consonant vowel consonant) such as trap, stop, plan. They will also read a range of CVCC words (consonant vowel consonant consonant) such as milk, fast, cart.

Phonics learning step 5: vowel digraphs

Children are then introduced to vowel digraphs.

A digraph is two vowels that together make one sound such as: /oa/, /oo/, /ee/, /ai/. They will move onto sounding out words such as deer, hair, boat, etc. and will be taught about split digraphs (or 'magic e'). They will also start to read words combining vowel digraphs with consonant clusters, such as: train, groan and stool.

Phonics learning step 6: consonant digraphs.

Children will also learn the **consonant digraphs (two consonants that together make one sound)** ch and sh and start blending these with other sounds to make words, such as chat, shop, chain and shout.

Encoding, or learning to spell as well as read

Alongside this process of learning to decode (read) words, children will need to continue to practise forming letters which then needs to move onto encoding. **Encoding is the process of writing down a spoken word, otherwise known as spelling.** They should start to be able to produce their own short pieces of writing, spelling the simple words correctly.

It goes without saying that reading a range of age-appropriate texts as often as possible will really support children in their grasp of all the reading and spelling of all the phonemes.

Phonics learning in KS1

By the end of **Reception**, children should be able to write one grapheme for each of the 44 phonemes.

In **Year 1**, they will start to explore vowel digraphs and trigraphs (a group of three letters that makes a single sound, like 'igh' as in 'sigh') further. They will begin to understand, for example, that the letters ea can make different sounds in different words (dream and bread). They will also learn that one sound can be represented by different groups of letters: for example, igh and ie make the same sound in light / pie.

Children in Year 2 will be learning spelling rules, such as adding suffixes to words (such as -ed, -ing, -er, -est, -ful, -ly, -y, -s, -es, -ment and -ness). They will be taught rules on how to change root words when adding these suffixes (for example, removing the 'e' from 'have' before adding -ing) and then move onto harder concepts, such as silent letters (knock, write) and particular endings (le in bottle and il in fossil).

Phrases

A phrase is a small group of words within a clause. We explain how children are taught about clauses as part of the primary-school grammar curriculum and what you need to know to support their learning at home.

A phrase is a small group of words that does not contain a verb (as soon as a verb is included, the group of words become a clause).

Examples of phrases are:

a sunny day

in the garage

last week

There are different types of phrases, for example:

Noun phrases
A noun phrase includes one noun as well as words that describe it, for example: the black dog. In the classroom, children might be asked to look at noun phrases and turn them into expanded noun phrases, for example changing 'the black dog' to 'the big, furry black dog'.

Prepositional phrases
These are phrases that contain a preposition, for example: on the mat, in the morning, under the chair, during the film.

Adverbial phrases
An adverbial phrase is built around an adverb and the words that surround it, for example: very slowly, as fast as possible.

What are children taught about phrases at each stage of primary school?

Children are taught to expand their noun phrases in **Year 2**. They then continue to enrich their writing with the use of adjectives in **Year 3 and 4.** In **Year 4**, they are also taught about prepositional phrases.

What questions should children expect on phrases in the Y6 grammar test?

Children may be asked questions similar to the following in the KS2 SPAG test:

Underline the longest possible noun phrase in the sentence below.

The film about otters was quite boring.

Answer: *The film about otters.*

Tick the option that shows how the underlined words are used in the sentence.

I am going to have lunch in the cafe where my Mum works.

as a prepositional phrase

as a relative clause

as a main clause

as a noun phrase

This is a very tricky question! It would be easy to think the underlined part of the sentence was a prepositional phrase, as it states where something is happening, but it contains a verb, so it must be a clause. This kind of grammar question demonstrates why teachers will probably spend some time explaining the difference between phrases and clauses in the classroom!

How do teachers teach children about phrases?

Teachers may teach noun phrases and prepositional phrases by:

- Encouraging children to use prepositional phrases at the start of sentences, for example by giving them a list of sentence openers that are all prepositional phrases (In the morning..., Beside the old church..., During the film..., Under the table...) and asking them to complete each sentence in their own way.

- Asking children to look through a text and underline all the noun phrases or prepositional phrases they can find.

- Looking at word banks or their partner's work to enrich their writing and add to it with extra description.

Play scripts

Children learn to read, write and perform play scripts as part of the English and drama curriculum in primary school. Find out about the features of this genre, as well as ways to support your child's learning at home.

A play script is a piece of writing written for the stage. Your child will learn the following facts about the play scripts they read, write and perform:

- A play script will include a list of characters (at the very beginning).
- It may be divided into acts which are then divided into scenes.
- Each scene will have a description of the setting at the start and then the characters' dialogue.
- Dialogue is set out with the character's name on the left, then a colon, then the dialogue (without speech marks).
- Stage directions for the actors are written every now and again in italics and brackets. For example:

Scene 1

The drawing room of Lady and Lord Montague, which is furnished with plush carpets, silk curtains and beautifully carved antique furniture. Lord Montague is sitting on a velvet sofa, smoking a pipe and reading the paper. Lady Montague is sitting at a grand piano, trying but failing to play a melody.

Lady Montague: Try as I might, I simply cannot get this blessed melody right!

Lord Montague: You are trying too hard, darling. Relax, look at the notes and let your fingers find their way to the right notes. Stop trying to get it right. Just feel the music.

Lady Montague: *(pushing a strand of hair from her face wearily)* Yes. Perhaps you are right.

How play scripts are used in primary school

Children start using **drama in the Foundation Stage**, where they may be asked to imagine roles and experiences and act these out.

In **Key Stage 1 drama** they will act out stories they know, taking on different characters and experimenting with voices, props and costumes.

In **Key Stage 2 drama** children are asked to act out play scripts in pairs or groups. They may then be asked to improvise scenes related to texts they have read. They then start to develop their own scripts based on these improvisations. They are taught how to set out a play script using the features shown above.

A teacher will often start by giving the children a scenario. For example: if the class were reading Cinderella, the teacher might show them a picture of the ugly sisters on the way to the ball. Children might be asked to imagine that the ugly sisters are having a conversation. What might they say to each other? Who might they be talking about? What might their hopes be for the evening? What might they say about Cinderella? Children would be encouraged to get into partners and act out this scene between the two sisters.

In Key Stage 2, this activity would most likely be followed by a lesson where children would start drafting the conversation between the two sisters. After this, they would have to write their play script up in neat, in a similar way to how the example on p168 is set out. Teachers often give children writing frames to help them with this. The writing frame might include lines for the characters' names, followed by colons and then space for the speech. Once children have written up their play script, they may be encouraged to improve it, by adding stage directions in brackets.

Reading and writing play scripts is a great way to bring stories alive for children. Reading play scripts out loud helps them to think about using expression to convey a character's feelings. Writing play scripts encourages them to infer and deduce information about what characters are thinking and feeling from what they have already read in a story.

Plural and singular

Singular and plural nouns and how they're taught in primary school, plus how KS1 and KS2 children learn about the formation of irregular plurals and how to use possessive apostrophes.

A **noun** names an object, person or place.

When a noun is **singular**, it means there is **one of them**. When a noun is **plural** it means there is **more than one.**

'Dog', 'balloon' and 'table' are singular nouns as there is only one of each of them.

If these nouns were plural, it would mean there were more than one of them. An -s would be added to the end of each word to make the plural forms of the words, 'dogs', 'balloons' and 'tables'.

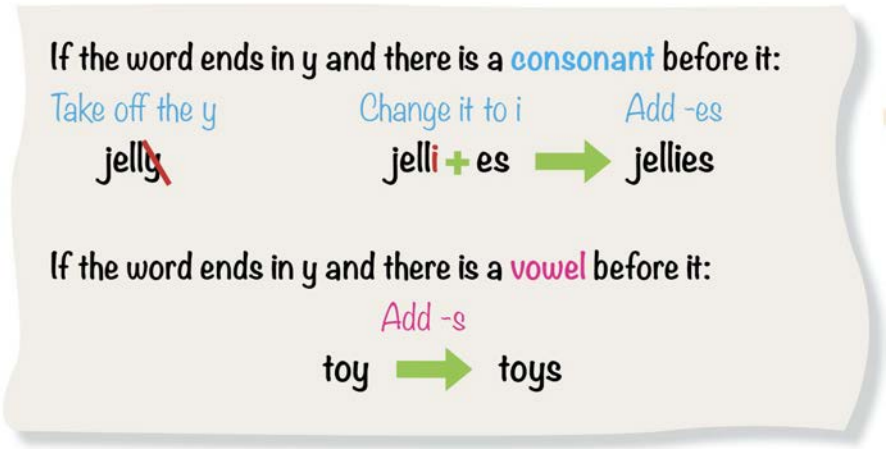
Forming plural nouns: the rules taught in primary school

To make most nouns plural we simply add -s.

There are exceptions, which children learn in primary school. The 2014 curriculum does not stipulate when these words must be learnt, but most children are introduced to spelling irregular plural endings in Year 3 and Year 4.

1. **If a noun ends in a 'y', to make the noun plural, the 'y' is removed and -ies is added:** 'baby' becomes 'babies' and 'party' becomes 'parties'

2. **If a noun ends in 'f' or 'fe', to make the noun plural the 'f' or 'fe' becomes 'ves':** 'calf' becomes 'calves' and 'knife' becomes 'knives'.



3. **If a noun ends in s / ss / ch / sh / x then we add -es when we make it plural, for example:** bus - buses, kiss - kisses, church - churches, brush - brushes, fox - foxes.

A useful way to remember this is that if the word "hisses" or "buzzes", the plural has an -es on the end.

-s	-ch	-sh	-tch	-x
bus	church lunch	brush dish	match watch	fox box

Adding an apostrophe to a word does not make it plural: apple's does not mean more than one apple (that's apples)!

Possessive apostrophes for singular and plural nouns

Possessive apostrophes show that something belongs to someone or something.

When we write a sentence where something belongs to a singular thing or person, we use an apostrophe:

David's *coat was on the back of the chair.*

- To add a possessive apostrophe to a singular word that doesn't end in s we add 's.

• If a singular word ends in -ss we also add 's to add a possessive apostrophe (*princess's room; boss's office*).

Children learn how to use possessive apostrophes for singular words in Year 2.

If a number of nouns own something, we need to use a plural possessive apostrophe:

Elephants' *ears are large to help them cool down when they are hot.*

• If a plural word ends in s we show possession by adding an apostrophe after the s:
the girls' books, the boys' bags

• If the plural word doesn't end in s we add 's:
children's toys, women's clothes, men's shoes

Children learn how to use possessive apostrophes for plural words in Years 3 and 4.

How do teachers help children to learn about singular and plural?

Children will use their understanding of singular and plural in grammar and spelling lessons throughout primary school.

• A teacher may explain a particular rule (for example, y changing to -ies). They may then ask children to look in a dictionary for more nouns ending in y and change them into their plural form.

• Teachers may incorporate spelling rules into their classroom displays so children have constant reference to them when they are writing.

• Children may be asked to use the Look Cover Write Check technique to help them learn certain spellings (where a child looks at a word, covers it over, writes it from memory, then checks it).

• Cutting and sticking activities can help to make spellings clear for children (for example, cutting out the word 'calf' then the ending 'ves', cutting the letter f off and then sticking the 'cal' and 'ves' together on a page).

• Children's spellings will be corrected in their writing and they are usually encouraged to write the correct spellings out several times to learn them.

Prefixes

Prefixes are groups of letters added to the beginning of a word, changing its meaning. Learning prefixes helps children with their spelling and vocabulary in KS1 and KS2.

A prefix is a string of letters added to the beginning of a root word, changing its meaning. Each prefix has a meaning (for example, un- means not, sub- means under and mis- means wrong or badly). Suffixes are groups of letters added to the end of a word.

Prefixes taught in Key Stages 1 and 2

Children start to learn about words with prefixes in **Year 1**, although most of them are not taught until Key Stage 2. They are expected to learn prefixes in the following order:

Prefixes	Example words	Things to note
Year 1	un	unhappy
Years 3 and 4	dis	disappoint
	mis	misbehave
	in	inactive
	il	illegal
	im	immature
	irr	irregular
	re	reappear
	sub	subheading
	inter	international

	super	supermarket
	anti	anti-clockwise
	auto	autobiography
Year 6	bi	bicycle
	aqua	aquarium
	aero	aeroplane
	super	supernatural
	micro	microscope
	audi	audible
	trans	transport
	prim	primary
	auto	automatic
	tele	telephone
	re	replay
	pre	prehistoric

In Year 6, **children will learn what each prefix means, and will look for other words with the same prefixes.**

Children are taught the meanings of different prefixes (for example: 'bi' means 'two'). Then they will look at words with these prefixes and how that meaning is incorporated into the word, for example: a bicycle has two wheels and a bilingual person is fluent in two languages. This 'breaking down' of words helps children to understand the meaning of other words and to think carefully about how these words are spelled.

Why are children taught prefixes?

Teaching children words with prefixes means that they are broadening their vocabulary by learning new words and their meanings, which they can then incorporate into their writing. It also means that they are learning the spellings of new words.

It is quite common for a teacher to choose one particular prefix and then give a list of spellings with that prefix for the children to learn.

Ways in which teachers **help children to learn words with prefixes** may include the following:

- Utilising the Look, Cover, Write, Check technique, where a child looks at a word, covers it over, writes it from memory and then looks back at the original word to check they have got it right.

- Worksheets where words needs to be matched with a definition.

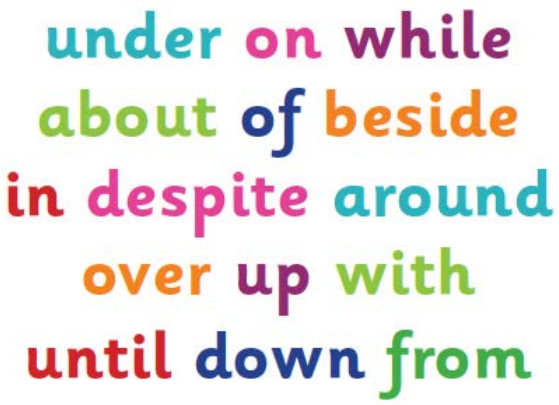
- 'Fill the gap' worksheets, where a few sentences are given, each missing a certain word with a prefix. A list of these words with prefixes is given in a box on the sheet, and children need to decide which word goes where.

- Asking children to find words with a certain prefix and find out their meanings (using a dictionary).

aeronautics aeroplane aerodynamic
misbehave misplace misread
irregular irrational irresponsible
submarine submerged subatomic
antibiotic antifreeze anticlockwise

Prepositions

Prepositions are some of the most common words in the English language. We explain how your child will learn to use them in primary school and why time connectives are so important in non-fiction writing.



Prepositions are linking words in a sentence. We use prepositions to explain where things are in time or space. Prepositions tell us where something is (for example, beside, under, on, against, beneath or over) or when something is happening (for example: until, during, after, before or more specifically 'on Christmas Day', 'at twelve o'clock' or 'in August').

Prepositions usually sit before nouns (or pronouns) to shows the noun's (or pronoun's) relationship to another word in the sentence.

When and how are children taught about prepositions in primary school?

In the **Foundation Stage**, children may be asked to describe the position of an object, using words such as next to, under, in, on, opposite, beside, etc. This will help them expand their vocabulary which will in turn improve their speaking and writing.

Children are formally introduced to prepositions and the role they play in a sentence in Year 3.

In **KS1 and KS2** children use a greater variety of prepositions. In particular, when children use prepositions to tell us when something is happening, they are also referred to as **time connectives**. By Year 6 children are expected to know the difference between a preposition (used before a noun; for example: *I sat before the fire.*) and a subordinating conjunction (used to introduce a subordinate clause; for example: *I had to learn the vocabulary before I could complete my homework.*).

Children will be encouraged to use time connectives in lots of different kinds of writing in Years 1-6. Time connectives are often used in fiction, but are also used in non-fiction genres such as recounts, biographies, instruction texts and information texts.

Preposition examples

There are around 150 prepositions in English, but we use them more frequently than other individual words. The prepositions of, to and in are among the ten most frequent words in English. Common prepositions include these words:

- about
- above
- after
- against
- as
- at
- before
- behind
- below
- beside
- between
- but
- by
- down
- during
- except
- for
- from
- in
- inside
- into
- of
- off
- on
- over
- than
- through
- to
- under
- until
- up
- with

Prepositions in the Y6 'SPAG' test

Tick **all** the sentences that contain a **preposition**.

	Tick **one**.
Before you go out, make sure you tidy up your room.	☐
I like to run around the park.	☐
Beneath the water she could see silver fish.	☐
Doctor Who is on the television.	☐

The last three sentences should be ticked (the prepositions are around, beneath and on). In the first sentence 'before' is a subordinating conjunction.

Being able to distinguish prepositions and subordinating conjunctions is particularly tricky as **the words when, after, until, before and since can be used as subordinating conjunctions or as prepositions in sentences.** Remember that if the word introduces a clause (a group of words including a verb) it's a subordinating conjunction. If it explains the position of something it's used as a preposition.

Pronouns

We explain what a pronoun is and how primary-school children are taught to use pronouns to avoid repetition in their written work.

A pronoun is a word used to replace a noun.

Examples of pronouns are: he, she, it, they. We use pronouns so that we don't need to keep repeating the same nouns; for example, rather than repeat the noun 'the car' in this sentence, we use a pronoun (in bold):

We took the car to the garage because the car needed fixing.

*We took the car to the garage because **it** needed fixing.*

Personal pronouns explained

A **personal pronoun** is a **word which can be used instead of a person, place or thing.** There are twelve personal pronouns for people (I, you, he, she, it, we, they, me, him, her, us and them) and three personal pronouns for things: they, them, it.

Personal pronouns allow you to avoid repeating a word and to refer to someone already mentioned. If the noun is plural, so is the pronoun which replaces it.

Possessive pronouns explained

Possessive pronouns are used to show ownership of a person or thing. Some can be used on their own (mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, whose); others must be used with a noun (my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose). Possessive pronouns are used to avoid repetition of the noun. For example:

John put John's bag on John's peg. He walked to John's classroom.

*John put **his** bag on **his** peg. He walked to **his** classroom.*

Pronouns in primary school

In Key Stage 1, children are encouraged to make sure that they don't keep repeating nouns and use pronouns instead. Children's ability to identify pronouns correctly is tested in Year 6 as part of the KS2 SATs Punctuation, grammar and spelling test.

Questions

Find out how, what and when children are taught about question marks in primary school in our grammar and punctuation guide for parents.

A question is a type of sentence that we ask or write to gain further information from a person or people responding. Written questions are punctuated with a question mark to show that the sentence has been completed.

Often, but not always, question sentences begin with one of the following words:

Who / What / When / Where / Why / How

How are you?
Who is that?
What is happening?

Not all questions begin with these words though; there are many other alternatives that can be used to frame the structure of a sentence. For example:

Have you ever tried vegan food before?
Do you have a pet?
Are you going to take your coat?

When are questions taught in the primary school classroom?

Questions are first taught during Year 1, when a child is learning the difference between 'yelling' (command), 'telling' (statement) and 'asking' sentences (questions).

In Year 1, children are also taught and encouraged to ask questions to find out further information; this often occurs during reading comprehension and topic (history and geography) lessons. By the end of Year 1, children will be expected to be able to identify and then punctuate the end of a question sentence using a question mark, and be able to ask simple questions within their writing.

In Year 2 children will be expected to write questions within their writing more

confidently, and be able to identify question sentences that require to be punctuated with a question mark. As part of the Y2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling SATs, children will also be expected to add punctuation to a sentence. For example:

Add a **full stop** or **question mark** to complete each sentence below.

	Tick **one.**
There is a fox in the road	☐
Are we going to the cinema	☐
Have you seen my rucksack	☐

In **Year 3**, when direct speech is formally introduced, children will be expected to punctuate questions with question marks within inverted commas (speech marks). Consolidation of this punctuation rule will continue throughout Upper Key Stage 2.

As part of the KS2 SATs, children will be expected to add the appropriate punctuation to a sentence. A SATs question on his topic might look like this:

Which sentence uses a **question mark** correctly?

	Tick **one.**
Are you ready?	☐
I think it's my favourite?	☐
What a brilliant time we had today?	☐
My name is Jamie?	☐

How are questions taught in the primary classroom?

When children are learning the difference between 'asking' and 'telling' sentences in Year 1, they will often learn about some of the key words that are involved in asking questions. Children will identify question sentences from worksheets, punctuate various sentences types with the appropriate punctuation, and then begin to write their own sentences as they progress throughout their time at school.

Question marks

Understand how question marks are explained and taught in the primary school classroom with our parents' guide to punctuation and grammar.

A question mark is a punctuation mark, or a symbol, that **shows that a question has ended.** Question marks can also be known as interrogation points as they end sentences where an answer or response is expected.

Question marks usually end question sentences. A **question sentence** is one that often starts with one of the following words: who, what, when, where, why or how, but question marks can also be used with sentences that start with other words. **Question marks can be added to sentences to represent a questioning tone** that would be used when spoken aloud.

Can I have an ice cream please?
What are you doing this afternoon?
Do you like playing computer games?
"Is this your coat?" asked Mrs Jones.

It is not grammatically correct to use question marks for indirect questions:

I asked Mum if I could play outside?
Jo asked the girl what her name was?

How are question marks taught in the primary classroom?

In **Year 1**, children will ask and be asked questions on various topics and discuss why they do so (to find out an answer to something). As part of their speaking and listening development, most teachers will discuss how we ask a question verbally with an inflection (change of tone of voice) at the end. To show this change of voice and that we would like to find something out, we use a question mark.

Children will identify question sentences from worksheets, punctuate various sentences types with the appropriate punctuation, and then begin to write their own sentences as they progress throughout their time at school.

Asking questions isn't solely a written exercise at school – being able to ask questions orally to further knowledge also aids development in speaking / listening.

When are question marks taught in primary school?

Question marks are first taught in Key Stage 1, specifically Year 1, when a child is taught the difference between “yelling, telling and asking” sentences. Children will begin to write question sentences ending with a question mark during Year 1.

By the end of Year 2, children will be expected to be able to identify question sentences and punctuate them with question marks in their Key Stage 1 SATs. For example:

Add a **full stop** or **question mark** to complete each sentence below.

	Tick **one.**
There is a book on the bed	☐
Are we going to the park	☐
Have you seen my phone	☐
My name is Amelia	☐

To leave Year 2 working at the expected standard for a child of their age in writing, children would be expected to demonstrate they can punctuate question sentences accurately and consistently when appropriate.

In **Year 3**, children will be taught how to use question marks within direct speech.

By the end of Year 6, children will be expected to be able to identify question sentences and punctuate them in Key Stage 2 SATs. For example:

By the end of Year 6, for children to reach the expected standard in writing, they will be expected to use question marks consistently and accurately in their writing.

Which sentence uses a **question mark** correctly?

	Tick **one.**
Are you ready?	☐
I think it's my favourite?	☐
What a brilliant time we had today?	☐
My name is Jamie?	☐

Reading comprehension

Once your child can read they'll be working on understanding what they read and really engaging with words in their literacy lessons. Reading comprehension is also a big part of SATs. Teacher Alice Hart explains how you can help boost your child's skills at home.

Primary school teachers assess children in reading every six weeks. Sometimes this will be by 'teacher assessment' where a teacher will read with a group and assess their understanding of a text against a set of objectives which helps them to decide how a child is progressing.

Schools assess children with a primary-school grading system and children are expected to make steady progress throughout their time at primary school.

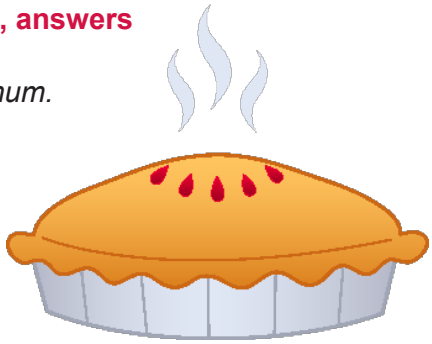
Reading comprehension and SATs

In Year 2 and Year 6 children sit the official SATs. The **SATs reading papers consist of non-fiction and fiction texts which are usually linked by a common theme.** Children are given copies of these texts, plus an answer booklet, which contains questions on the texts and space for answers.

Questions will indicate the maximum number of marks that can be awarded for an answer (1 mark, 2 marks or 3 marks). Sometimes the questions will involve multiple choice answers, or children will be required to complete a table, match up statements or label names of the features of a text.

Many of the questions in a SATs paper will require children to retrieve information from the text, which literally means picking out a relevant bit of information. Some questions involve children inferring information about a theme or characters based on what they have read. Some questions may involve deduction, where children have to draw their own conclusions using reasoning skills. Children may be asked to give their opinion on something (this will always need to be backed up by evidence from the text). Children may also be asked to comment on the effectiveness of the author's language.

Example reading comprehension text, questions, answers



"Let's get the dinner on shall we?" said Matthew's mum.

"What are we having, Mum?" Matthew asked her.

"Pie and peas," she replied cheerily.

Matthew grinned from ear to ear.

Mum smiled back at him. "I tell you what," she said, "why don't you go and learn your spellings for twenty minutes before we have dinner?"

The smile on Matthew's face disappeared.

"Do I have to?" he whined. Matthew thought practising spellings was a bit like watching paint dry.

Retrieval of information

Example question: What was Matthew's mum making for dinner?
Answer: Pie and peas.

Inference

Example question: How does Matthew feel about eating pie and peas?
How do you know?
Answer: He loves pie and peas. We know this because he grins from ear to ear when his mum tells him that is what she is making for dinner.

Deduction

Example question: What do you think Matthew might do next? Why do you think this?
Answer: There could be several answers to this, but the person marking the text would be looking for the child to have thought about what Matthew might do, based on what they have read. For example: I think Matthew will go and watch TV instead of doing his spellings because he doesn't want to do his spellings. Or: I think Matthew will learn his spellings but he will complain about it a lot!

Opinion

Example question: Do you think Matthew's mum is a kind person? Use evidence

from the text to support your answer.
Answer: Yes, I think Matthew's mum is a kind person because she is cooking his favourite meal. We also know she wants him to do well at school, which is why she asks him to practise his spellings.

Commenting on effectiveness of language

Example question: 'Matthew thought practising spellings was a bit like watching paint dry.' Why is this a good way to show how Matthew feels about his spellings?
Answer: The author is comparing spelling practice to watching paint dry to show how boring Matthew finds it.

Practising reading comprehension at home

One of the best ways to improve reading comprehension skills, particularly for KS1 and KS2 SATs, is to practise past papers. If possible, read through the text with your child and practise answering some of the questions together. Don't forget to discuss what a question is asking – for example, if a question asks for your child's opinion on something backed up by evidence from the text, you may need to remind them that there are two parts to that question (writing their opinion and then offering evidence from the text to back it up); you may also need to discuss what 'evidence' means.

Another way to help your child with their reading comprehension is to discuss books with your child while you are reading, posing similar questions to the examples given above. You could also help them write a book review with some of these types of questions as prompts.

Recounts

Has your child been asked to write a recount? Find out what the main features of this kind of non-fiction text are, plus how recounts are used in primary school literacy lessons.

A recount text is a piece of writing that gives details of an event that has happened.

Recount texts: features

Recount texts can come in the form of diary entries, newspaper articles and letters, and usually have the following features:

- Written in chronological order
- Written in the first person (diaries and letters)
- Written in the past tense
- Use time connectives

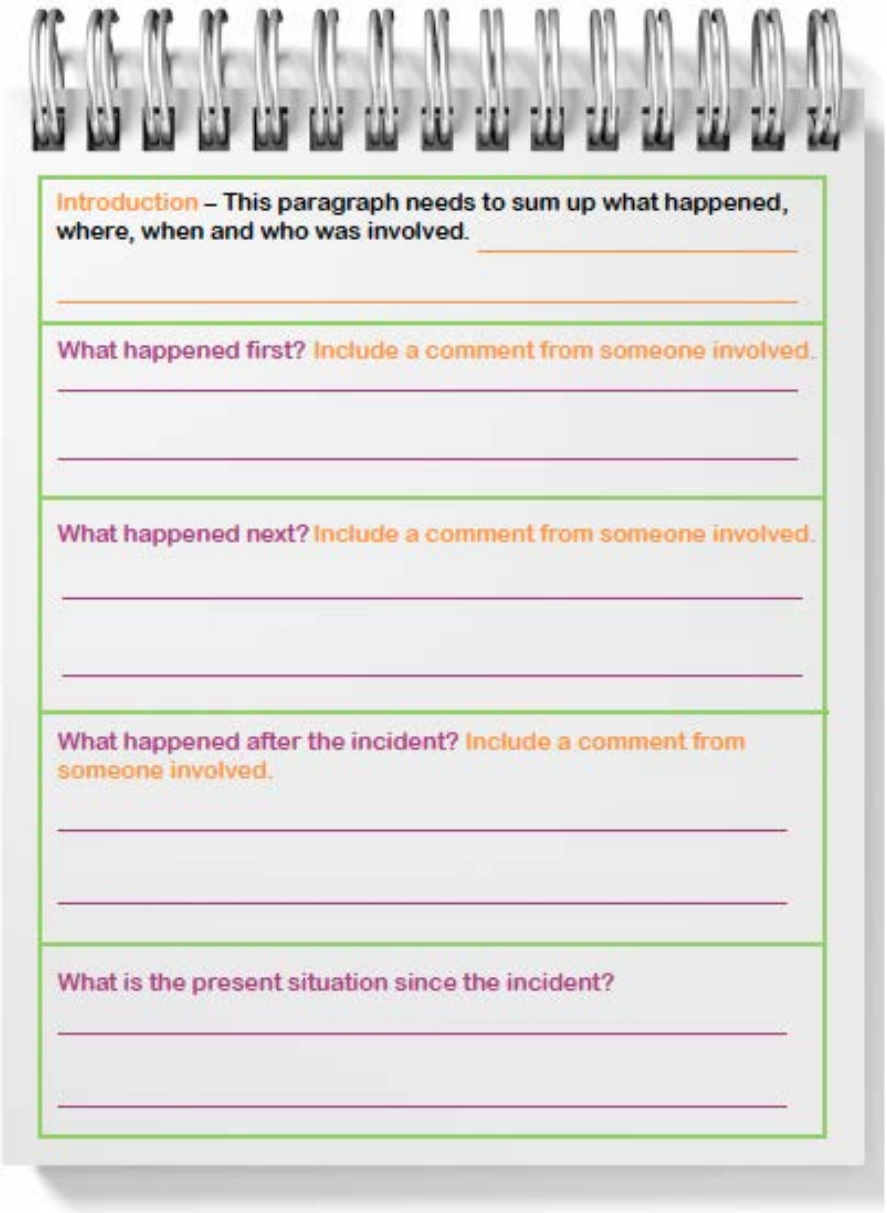
Children will usually be asked to write a recount about something exciting and memorable that has happened, or may be asked to imagine themselves as a character in a book and write a recount of an important event that has occurred in the story.

The suggested **recount writing unit in Year 1** centres around a simple account of something exciting that has happened. Children will be encouraged to use time connectives such as ‘first’, ‘then’, ‘after that’. They may be given pictures to put in order to help them with their writing.

The suggested **recount writing unit in Year 4** culminates in writing a newspaper article. Children will look at newspaper articles and attempt to work out which parts are fact and which are opinion. They will look at the organisational features of a newspaper article (introduction, paragraphs, quotations from witnesses, sequencing of events signalled by time connectives and a concluding paragraph). Often, a newspaper article will be accompanied by a picture with a caption. Children will then be asked to write a recount (possibly of a real-life event that has happened to them) in the form of a newspaper article. They will start by drafting this and then will edit and revise it with the help of their teacher’s marking or comments from peers. They will

then attempt to produce a finished piece of writing similar to the one above.

There is a further **recount unit in Year 5** on newspaper articles. In this case, children are shown television interviews about a particular topic and then think about how effective the questions have been in extracting relevant information. They look at a variety of newspaper articles that are recounts of particular events, then go onto researching a topic to report. They complete interviews on this topic and then write up their recount in the form of a newspaper article.



Relative clause

Relative clauses enrich sentences by offering extra information. We explain how to identify them in a sentence and offer tips to help parents support their child's grammatical understanding.

A **relative clause** is a specific type of **subordinate clause that adapts, describes or modifies a noun.**

Relative clauses **add information to sentences by using a relative pronoun** such as who, that or which.

Relative pronoun	Noun that the pronoun refers to
who	Refers to a person
which	Refers to an animal, place or thing
that	Can refer to a person, place or thing

The relative clause is used to add information about the noun, so it must be 'related' to the noun.

Here are some examples of relative clauses (in purple):

She lives in Worcester, which is a cathedral city.
That's the girl who lives near school.
I don't like the clown that has a bright red nose.
I am cross with the cat, which has pooed in the garden.
Rachel liked the new chair, which was very comfortable.

A relative clause can also be an embedded clause if it is positioned in the middle of a sentence, for example:

My gran, who is 82, still goes swimming every day.
Jamie, who scored the winning goal, was congratulated by his team.

When are relative clauses taught in primary school?

In **Year 2** children are taught the terms ‘clause’ and ‘subordinate clause’.

In **Year 5** children should be taught **what a relative clause is and how to use it correctly in their writing.**

Relative clauses in the primary-school classroom

Children are taught grammatical terminology and concepts as outlined by the national curriculum (revised in 2014).

Example of practical activities to help children with grammar learning include:

- Identifying and highlighting examples of relative clauses in a text or sentence.
- Adding their own relative clauses to sentences.
- Manipulating sentences written on pieces of card.
- Using relative clauses in their writing.
- Identifying or adding relative clauses when editing their own pieces of extended writing.
- Playing with relative clauses by changing them to see the effect on the sentence. At home, you could take it in turns with your child to see who can come up with the funniest one!

relative clause relative clause relative clause relative clause relative clause relative clause

Rhyme

From reading rhyming poems to identifying rhyme schemes and rhyming couplets, we explain everything you need to know to help you support your child's love and learning of poetry at home.

When two words rhyme they have word endings that sound similar. For example:

I love to write poems that rhyme

I do this often in my spare time.

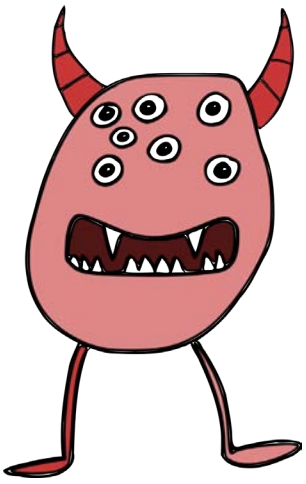
Rhyme in Key Stage 1

Children in Year 1 and Year 2 will **read, perform and write their own poems involving rhyme.**

A teacher will start with an engaging poem to read to the class. Children will be encouraged to read the poem altogether out loud and perhaps to memorise it. They may then go onto performing the poem in pairs or groups, with the accompaniment of musical instruments and actions. They may be encouraged to contribute ideas to the teacher so that they can write a poem on the board. They may move onto **writing their own poems using a writing frame**, for example:

My friend the alien had two red toes

My friend the alien did not _____ nose.



(The child simply needs to fill in the blanks, for example with the words *have a*, and not find a rhyming word.)

For more able children the following might be appropriate:

The friend the alien had two red toes

My friend the alien _____

(In this case, the child would need to complete the line, making sure it ended with a word rhyming with 'toes'.) Teachers will often get children to generate a list of words rhyming with 'toes' to help them before they do this.

Rhyme in Key Stage 2

In Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 English children will read a variety of rhyming poems and will be asked to comment on the **rhyme scheme.**

My grubby little brother

Doesn't like to take a shower,

He goes for ages without a wash

While I smell like a flower!

Here, because the second and fourth lines rhyme, but the first and third lines don't rhyme, we would say the rhyme scheme is ABCB.

Sometimes a poem is written in **rhyming couplets:**

My auntie wears a floppy hat,

Lopsided glasses and a pink cravat.

She wears orange tartan braces,

Shiny red shoes with fluorescent laces.

Here, we would say the rhyme scheme was AABB.

Children in Key Stage 2 will look at rhyme schemes and will usually follow the same teaching sequence as in Key Stage 1, where they read poems aloud and then perform them. They will then be encouraged to write their own poems in a similar style. Children who find this difficult are often given a writing frame to support their ideas, but some children will be able to write their own rhyming poems from scratch.

night kite flight
sight bite height
might light fight
tight fright site

Root words

We explain what a root word is and how prefixes and suffixes can be added to root words to turn them into words with different meanings.

A root word is a basic word with no prefix or suffix added to it (a prefix is a string of letters that go at the start of a word; a suffix is a string of letters that go at the end of a word). By adding prefixes and suffixes to a root word we can change its meaning.

The suffixes -er and -est are also used to form the comparative and superlative of adjectives (for example, light / lighter / lightest).

For example:

The root word **astro** could have the suffix **-nomy** added to it to make the word **astronomy.**

'Astro' means 'stars' and 'nomy' means the study of something. Astronomy is the study and knowledge of stars.

The root word **lingual** could have the prefix **bi-** added to it to make the word **bilingual.**

'Bi' means two and 'lingual' means pertaining to language. Someone who is bilingual is fluent in two languages.

Some root words can have both prefixes and suffixes attached to them to turn them into words with different meanings:

Root word	With a prefix added	With a suffix added
normal	abnormal	normality, normalise
might	almighty	mightily
education	co-education	educational, educationally
legal	illegal	legalise, legality

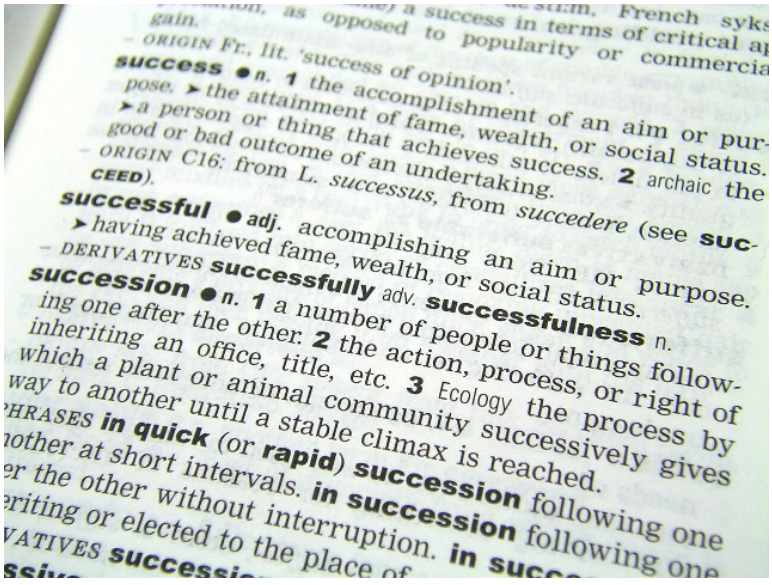
mature	immature	maturity
behave	misbehave	behaviour, behaved
fiction	non-fiction	fictional, fictionally
dress	undress	dressed
happy	unhappy	happier, happily

Children learn a range of words with suffixes and prefixes throughout their time at primary school, usually starting in Year 2 and Year 3.

Often, children will be given a list of spellings to learn at home that all have the same suffix, or all have the same prefix.

It is a good idea for them to be aware of root words, as learning one root word (for example: education), will then help them to spell other words containing that word such as co-education and educational.

Learning root words, suffixes and prefixes also helps children to understand words better, as they begin to see links between different words and identify word families.


gain. ...as opposed to popularity or commercia... ...a success in terms of critical ap... ...French syks...
– ORIGIN Fr., lit. 'success of opinion'.
success ● *n.* **1** the accomplishment of an aim or pur-pose. ➤ the attainment of fame, wealth, or social status. ➤ a person or thing that achieves success. **2** archaic the good or bad outcome of an undertaking.
– ORIGIN C16: from L. *successus*, from *succedere* (see **SUC-CEED**).
successful ● *adj.* accomplishing an aim or purpose. ➤ having achieved fame, wealth, or social status.
– DERIVATIVES **successfully** *adv.* **successfulness** *n.*
succession ● *n.* **1** a number of people or things follow-ing one after the other. **2** the action, process, or right of inheriting an office, title, etc. **3** *Ecology* the process by which a plant or animal community successively gives way to another until a stable climax is reached.
PHRASES **in quick** (or **rapid**) **succession** following one ...other at short intervals. **in succession** following one ...er the other without interruption. **in succ...**
...riting or elected to the place of...
...VATIVES **succes...**

Semi-colons

Understand how semi-colons are taught in the primary-school classroom with our parents' guides to grammar and punctuation.

A semi-colon is a punctuation mark that is used to separate two independent (main) clauses that are closely related.

It looks like a dot and a comma, one on top of the other:

A main or independent clause is a clause that contains a subject and an object. Main clauses make sense on their own. For example:

It was cold and the sun was shining.

It was cold; the sun was shining.

As with commas and full stops, semi-colons make the reader 'pause' when they come across them. A reader should pause for a short time with a comma, for longer and more deliberately with a semi-colon and longest for a full stop.

I love to sing; my brother loves to dance.

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

The town was deserted; everyone was on holiday.

Semi-colons can also be used to separate items within a list, to help clarify internal groups if the list already contains internal commas. For example:

My dream band would include: Bruce Springsteen on vocals; Jimmy Page on lead guitar, acoustic guitar and back-up vocals and Dave Grohl on drums.

The team will be made up of Jane Smith, swimmer; John Black, cyclist; and Amelia Lee, runner.

Using semi-colons within lists is more of a Key Stage 3 writing target, but some teachers will introduce it in Year 6.

To use semi-colons to punctuate independent clauses correctly, a good grasp of what a clause is really does help!

In the primary curriculum it is accepted that there are two types of clause: a main or independent clause and a subordinate or dependent clause.

- A main clause is a sentence that makes sense on its own.
- A subordinate (supporting) clause relies on another part of the sentence to make sense.

If there is more than one clause in a sentence, they might be joined together by a coordinating conjunction (but, however) or by a semi-colon.

Whether a semi-colon, comma or conjunction is used to link the two clauses is the author's choice. In the case of semi-colons, they mark the end of one independent clause and the beginning of another, so they can be used instead of a coordinating conjunction, comma or even a full stop.

How are semi-colons taught in primary school?

Semi-colons are first introduced at the end of a child's time at primary school, in Year 6. They are one of the more complex pieces of punctuation for a child to get to grips with at school.

In KS2 SATs, children will be expected to be able to insert semi-colons in the correct place within a sentence. You'll find an example SATs question on the next page.

Insert a semi-colon into the correct place in the following two sentences:

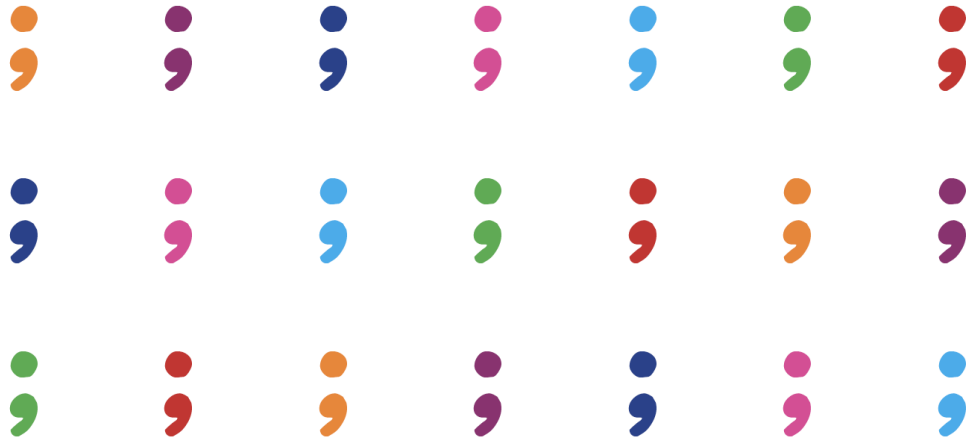
It was cold and wet they really wanted to go home.

The ornament was no longer on the desk they wondered if someone had stolen it.

When are semi-colons taught in the primary-school classroom?

Children will often be introduced to semi-colons first when revising types of sentences (simple, compound and complex) and how they differ from each other. Semi-colons will be introduced as an alternative to coordinating conjunctions within compound sentences with two independent clauses.

By the end of Year 6, children will be expected to use or at least attempt to use semi-colons in their writing.



Sentences

Sentence level work is everything your child will be taught about grammar, text content and punctuation in the primary classroom. We offer examples of activities to help them practise and improve their writing at home.

Teachers focus on three areas in literacy: word level work, sentence level work and text level work.

Word level relates to the **spelling of individual words.**

Sentence level relates to **grammar, content and punctuation.**

Text level relates to the **structuring of a text** as a whole, for example: writing a beginning, a middle and an end for a story, using paragraphs, remembering an introduction for a report, etc.

Sentence level work in the primary classroom

Sentence level work could involve the following in Reception, KS1 and KS2:

• **Reminding children to use capitals at the start of their sentences and full stops at the end.** For this, children need to understand what a sentence is (a grammatical unit made up of one or more words). Lots of practice paying attention to pausing at the full stop when you're reading together at home can help with this.

• Encouraging children to think about where question marks and exclamation marks should go. It is important to discuss with them what these forms of punctuation are for and point them out when reading.

• Showing children how commas are often used to split up clauses in a sentence.

• Modelling correct use of speech punctuation.

• Helping them understand how to make nouns and verbs agree (for example, if a child has written: *He take the bucket and spade*, this would need to be corrected to: *He takes the bucket and spade*).

• Modelling making a sentence more interesting

by adding adjectives to a noun, or adding adverbs to a verb.

• Showing children how two simple sentences can be joined together using a connective to make a complex sentence. For example: The monster roared loudly. It was hungry. could be changed to: The monster roared loudly because it was hungry.

Sentence level work can be done as a stand-alone activity, for example: teachers may give children worksheets on connectives, punctuation or powerful verbs.

It is also often taught as part of the main literacy teaching of a text; when modelling or editing a piece of writing, a teacher will pay particular attention to sentence level work. Modelling good sentences on the board is crucial for children to be able to learn how to form their own sentences. Reading a range of texts is also very important in terms of getting used to how sentences are structured.

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Shared writing

Shared writing is a collaborative technique teachers use to help children develop ways to improve their writing. See an example of shared writing at work and an explanation of how it gives children a model of what they are expected to write.

Shared writing is a process teachers use on a regular basis to **help children to understand how to write a particular kind of text and to provide them with a model piece of writing to emulate.** It involves a teacher producing some text on the board with input from the class.

Children are encouraged to put their hands up to give suggestions, and the use of talk partners (where children get into pairs and discuss ideas before contributing) and writing on mini-whiteboards can really help children in generating ideas. These two strategies ensure that all the children are properly engaged in a lesson, rather than just the few who always put their hands up!

Here is an example of how a shared writing session might be carried out to a Year 3 class. The teacher's words are in bold. Words on the board are in italic:

Today we are going to imagine we are Theseus, travelling through the maze towards the Minotaur. These are the things we need to include in our writing:

Teacher shows the following already written on the board:

Learning objective: To write about Theseus' s journey into the maze

Success criteria: Describe the maze using sight, sound, touch and smell. Use capitals and full stops in the right places

I am going to start by writing:

I arrive at the entrance of the maze, feeling

How might Theseus be feeling?

Teacher takes ideas from children including: scared, apprehensive, terrified, petrified, brave, excited.

These are all great ideas. I am going to choose a couple to finish my sentence:

I arrive at the entrance of the maze, feeling petrified but pretending to be brave.

Now I want you to close your eyes and imagine you are Theseus arriving at the entrance to the maze. What can you see? What can you smell? Can you hear anything? Talk to someone next to you about your ideas.

Teacher takes ideas from the children, including: mouldy walls, a dark tunnel, rats scuttling, the sound of bones crunching, people screaming.

You are doing really well at making this all sound very scary! Now I am starting a new sentence, so what do I need at the beginning? (Child answers: "A capital letter."). That's right, a capital letter. I am going to write:

I am faced with a dark tunnel and I can see rats scuttling around.

Could we improve this, by comparing the dark tunnel to something else? Could we say: A tunnel as dark as…..? Talk to someone next to you about your ideas.

Teacher takes ideas from children including: night, a black hole, the midnight sky, black paper, a haunted house.

These are all good ideas, but I'm going to choose 'the midnight sky'.

Teacher changes sentence so it reads:

I am faced with a tunnel as dark as the midnight sky and I can see rats scuttling around.

What do you think he hears as he heads down the tunnel?

Teacher takes ideas from children including: terrified screams, the Minotaur roaring, people being eaten.

I am going to write:

I head down the tunnel and hear the Minotaur roaring and terrified screams.

Could we improve this by saying who is making the terrified screams and why?

Teacher takes ideas from children.

Let's re-write the sentence:

I head down the tunnel and hear the Minotaur roaring and the terrified screams of people waiting to be eaten.

Now, listen to me read what we have written so far:

I arrive at the entrance of the maze, feeling petrified but pretending to be brave. I am faced with a tunnel as dark as the midnight sky and I can see rats scuttling around. I head down the tunnel and hear the Minotaur roaring and the terrified screams of people waiting to be eaten.

The teacher may then refer back to the success criteria and discuss with children whether they think they have achieved this.

In this short session, the teacher has encouraged children to use their imagination to describe the setting and characters. She has helped them to include a simile, adjectives and some powerful verbs. She has also encouraged them to extend sentences using connectives (although this has not been explicitly referred to). She has modelled where to put capitals and full stops.

Shared writing is a great way to fire up children's imagination; collaborating on ideas and 'borrowing' from others provides children with a much richer vocabulary to use when writing. It also gives children a model of what is expected of their writing in terms of content, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

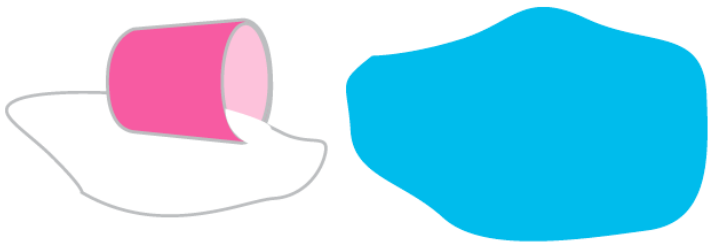
Teachers carry out shared writing sessions with a whole class and also in groups. Group shared writing is often carried out for lower-ability writers who need more support, or for more able writers, in order to show them to use a feature the rest of the class are not ready for yet such as adverbs, metaphors or speech punctuation.

Similes

In Key Stage 2 children learn to recognise the use of figurative language in the texts they are reading. They will also be encouraged to use similes (and perhaps metaphors) in their writing. We explain how to identify similes and encourage your child to use them to improve their written work.

A simile is a comparison phrase which finds similar characteristics in two objects and compares them, always by using the words 'like' or 'as'. Writers often use similes to make their writing richer and give the reader a really good picture of what is being described. For example:

The spilt milk was like a lake.



This simile is used to show that the amount of milk spilt was large and spread across a surface, just like a lake.

The similes in this passage are highlighted in bold:

*The cracked earth was as **dry as sandpaper**. Suddenly, **lightning forked in the sky like fluorescent veins**. The sky darkened to a moody grey and **thunder roared like an angry lion**. Rain sluiced down from the sky, drenching the parched earth.*

How are children taught to use similes?

In **Key Stage 1**, children are encouraged to use **adjectives** to describe people and places in their stories.

In **Key Stage 2**, teachers start to guide children in using **similes**. A good way of doing this, is to show children a picture from a story they are studying. They may ask them to choose something from the picture (for example, the moon) and then ask them what it looks like. Children may come up with ideas like: a plate, a coin or a face. A

very simple simile could be:

The moon was like a face.

The teacher could help the children develop this by asking: How is the moon like a face? They might then come up with better similes such as:

The moon was as pale as a face. or *The moon shone like a happy face.*

Teachers will often ask children to look at poetry and **find the similes in poems**. This is a good way of encouraging then to use similes when it comes to their own writing. A teacher may develop a child's writing by encouraging the use of similes through marking. For example, if a child wrote the following:

The girls walked up to the dark house. Cautiously, they went up the old, rickety steps, which creaked. The door was hanging open slightly and all the windows were smashed.

A teacher might encourage the use of similes by writing the following questions next to the writing:

- What could you compare the creaky sound of the steps to?
- What could you compare the open door to?

Similes can be difficult to construct; children need plenty of time to think them over.

How are similes and metaphors different?

Similes are often connected to learning about **metaphor** (a comparison which suggests what something is like by comparing it to something else, but isn't literally true) as they are both forms of **figurative language**. Metaphors don't use the words 'like' or 'as'.

Simile: *My brother is as greedy as a piglet.*

Metaphor: *My brother is a piglet.*

Simple, compound and complex sentences

Simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences... can you identify the different types of sentence construction your child will learn in KS1 and KS2? Our parent-friendly guide sorts out any confusion and explains how your child will be taught to put grammar into practice.

A sentence is a grammatical unit made up of one or more words (*Go!* is a sentence, as is *The cat sat on the mat.*). Sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation point.

What is a simple sentence?

Sentences can be structured in different ways.

A simple sentence has a subject and ONLY ONE verb:

The girl sprinted after the tiger.

The cat purred.

Simple sentence = subject + ONE verb

What is a compound sentence?

A compound sentence is formed when you join two main clauses with a connective. In a compound sentence the clauses are linked by coordinating conjunctions / connectives (and, but, so, or).

I like bananas and I like grapes.

Zoe can be rude at times but she is a nice girl.

Compound sentence = main clause + connective + main clause

What is a complex or multi-clause sentence?

Complex sentences can also be referred to as multi-clause sentences.

A complex sentence is formed when you join a main clause and a subordinate clause with a connective. A subordinate clause is one that relies on a main clause to make sense.

The connectives in complex sentences are subordinating conjunctions and they tell us about the order or the place in which things happened or specify a cause or effect relationship between events. Connectives used in complex sentences include after, although, as, because, if, since, unless, when.

I love roast potatoes, although my mum prefers them mashed.

You need to prepare for the spelling test tomorrow if you want to get all your spellings right.

The big dog barked whenever I knocked on the door.

Complex sentence = main clause + connective + subordinate clause

Complex sentences can also be constructed by including relative clauses (which are subordinate clauses), for example:

Tom, who liked to read, settled down happily with his new book.

How are children taught sentence construction in KS1?

Children are not necessarily taught the concept of compound and complex sentences explicitly in KS1, but teachers will encourage children to notice the use of connectives in texts they are reading and how they make the writing more effective.

In **Y1**, children start joining parts of sentences (clauses) using 'and'. For example:

There was a monster in my room and he was roaring.

In **Y2**, children start using subordination, which occurs in a complex sentence. So instead of writing: *I wanted some ice-cream*. they need to expand this using connectives to something like: *I wanted some ice-cream but there was none.*

How is sentence construction taught in KS2?

Children continue to be expected to use compound and complex sentences. They will be expected to use more and more varied and sophisticated connectives.

In **Years 3 and 4** they are expected to use 'when,' 'if,' 'because' and 'although'.

In **Years 5 and 6** they are expected to use 'meanwhile,' 'therefore,' 'however,' 'consequently,' and other connectives.

By **Year 6** children are expected to recognise, understand and be able to explain what simple, compound and complex sentences are, as this is likely to come up in the KS2 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test.

Teachers use a variety of methods for encouraging children to improve their sentence structure:

Teachers often put lists of connectives up around the classroom to encourage children to remember to use them in their writing.

They may also play classroom games, saying sentences out loud using connectives. An example of this is to give children the half-sentence:

I would like to get a dog, however...

and then ask them to repeat it, adding their own half of the sentence, for example:

I would like to get a dog, however my mum won't let me.

Teachers will also model the use of compound and complex sentences on the board when they are drafting example text for the children.

When a teacher marks a draft piece of writing, they may, in their marking, draw the child's attention to how two simple sentences could be joined by a connective, or how one simple sentence could be expanded by a connective and a second clause.

Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence
Simple sentence Compound sentence Complex sentence

Speech marks

Understand how speech marks (or inverted commas) are used when punctuating direct speech with our grammar guide.

Inverted commas (also known as **speech marks** and **quotation marks**) are punctuation marks that show us where direct speech starts and ends.

Speech marks are not used if we are writing indirect (reported) speech.

The Wicked Stepmother told Cinderella to clean the floor and one of her stepsisters asked why she hadn't polished her shoes yet.

"Clean the floor, Cinderella!" the Wicked Stepmother told her.
"And why haven't you polished my shoes yet?" asked one of her stepsisters.

How are speech marks used?

Speech marks or inverted commas are used to show what the words actually spoken by a person or character are. Direct speech is separated from a reporting

clause by a comma. For example:

> **"Although I wish they wouldn't," she sighed, "my children fight all the time."**

As demonstrated in the example, the words spoken directly (*Although I wish they wouldn't / my children fight all the time*) are marked by speech marks. The words spoken have also been separated by a reporting clause (she sighed).

When two or more people are having a conversation, a new line for each speaker is used, as this clarifies who is speaking. For example:

> **"Mum!" Sarah shouted, "where are my football boots?"**
> **"I don't know," her mum sighed.**
> **"Have you checked your sports bag?"**

How are speech marks taught in the primary classroom?

When **speech marks are first introduced in Year 3,** there is a lot of use of drama and reading class texts aloud. Children will identify direct speech within texts they are reading as a class.

In Year 4 there is more focus on multiple speakers.

In Y5 and 6, children will be taught and expected to use the correct punctuation for speech, with multiple speakers and reporting clauses breaking up the direct speech.

When are speech marks taught in the primary-school classroom?

Inverted commas are first taught in Lower Key Stage 2, in Year 3. As **punctuating direct speech is a fundamental primary-school writing objective,** the use of speech marks will be reinforced in every subsequent year group.

In Year 3, teachers will focus more on simply punctuating the spoken words with inverted commas to indicate the specific words that have been spoken. In Y4, this progresses onto using commas to separate the reported clause from the direct speech, and using forms of punctuation other than full stops in the inverted commas.

For example:

The referee shouted, "Foul!" as loudly as he could.

In Years 3 and 4, children learn that the reporting clause can be positioned before or after the direct speech in the sentence.

Noah stopped, took in a large breath and yelled, "Freeze!"

During the SATs Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation test taken at the end of Year 6, children are also likely to be asked a question about inverted commas and/or the correct punctuation needed to show speech. For example:

Rewrite the sentence below as **direct speech**. Remember to punctuate your answer correctly.

The bus driver shouted for the children to be quiet.

The bus driver shouted _____

_____

_____

By the end of Year 6, when a child's writing is assessed, they will be expected to use speech to move the action in their stories forward and to punctuate correctly.

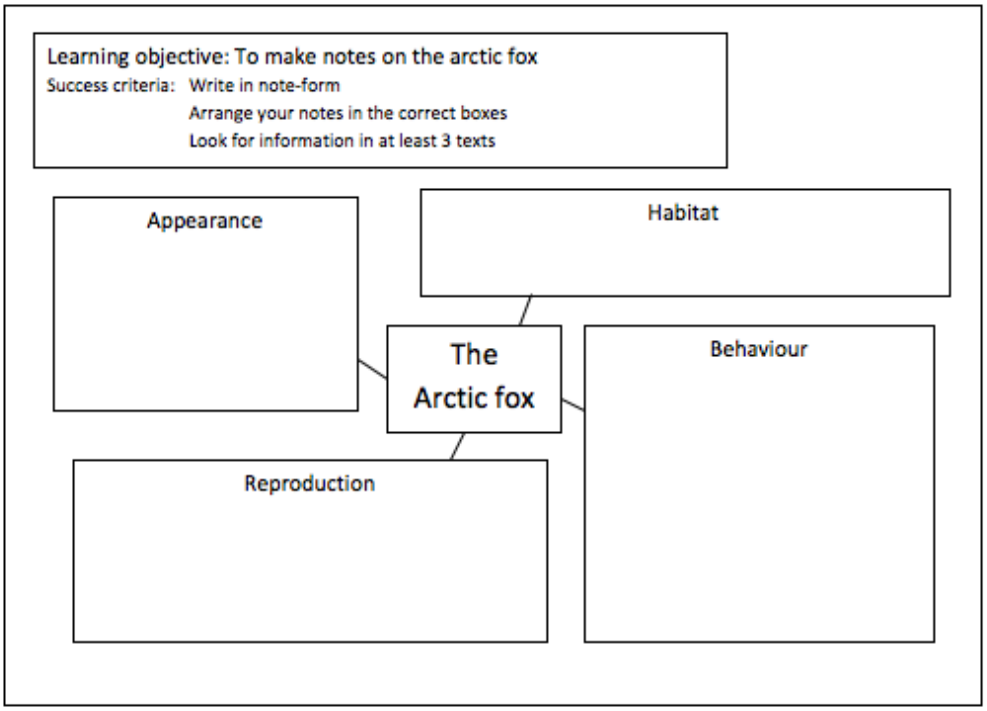
Spider diagrams

Spider diagrams are common planning tools in the primary-school classroom, used in science as well as literacy. We explain what you need to know to help your child use a spider diagram when preparing a fiction or non-fiction piece of writing.

Spider diagrams are often used by teachers to help children make notes on a particular subject. A picture or word may be put in the middle of the page and then several 'legs' drawn radiating outwards. Children then need to write words or phrases about the object in the centre.

A spider diagram could be used to **describe a certain character**. Having a picture in the centre of the diagram means that children have something concrete to refer to when describing the character, rather than relying on their memory.

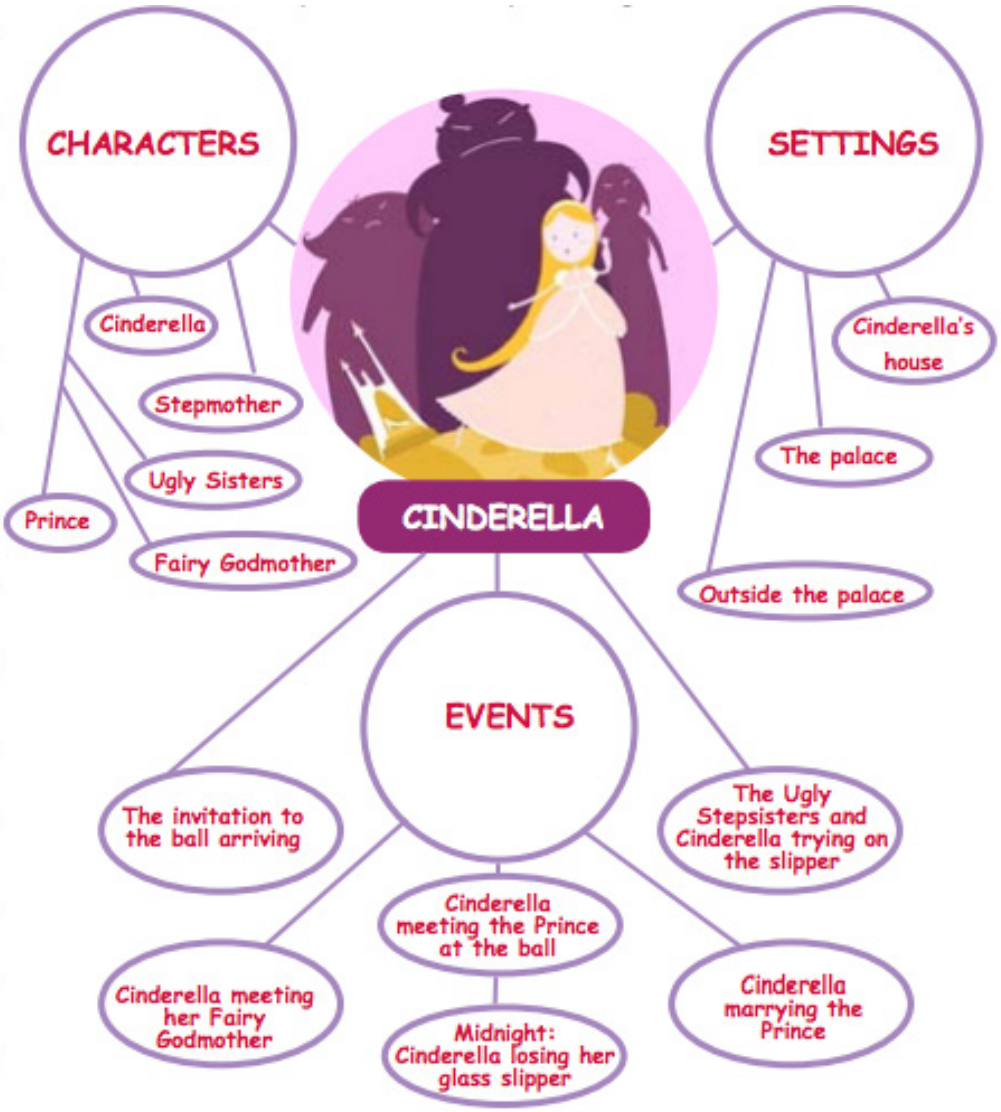
A spider diagram could be used when **researching a subject for a non-fiction piece of writing.** This spider diagram prompts children to put different bits of information into different boxes, so that the information is already 'sorted' before they start writing it up into paragraphs:



Spider diagrams are an excellent way to encourage children to jot down their thoughts without having to worry about writing in full sentences or thinking about punctuation. They are either used as a stand-alone activity to encourage children to externalise their thoughts and provide the teacher with an assessment opportunity, or they are used as a means of planning a 'neat' piece of writing.

Other literacy planning and comprehension diagrams used in the primary classroom are **story maps, story flowcharts and story mountains.**

They are also used in science so that a teacher can assess how much knowledge children have on a particular subject before they start a unit of work.



Split digraphs ('magic e')

The way children learn to spell using phonics and phonetic terminology can cause utter bewilderment to parents trying their best to help at home. We explain 'magic e', or split digraph.

Helping your child learn to read with phonics is all very well at the beginning: "c – a – t. Cat". Simple. But, as the English language is so notoriously complicated, it's inevitable that learning to read and spell becomes more complicated too as primary students move on to learning more complex spelling patterns. One common spelling pattern is the 'magic e'.

What is 'magic e'?

The proper name for 'magic e' is 'split digraph', and it means that a vowel sound has been split. In fact some teachers no longer use the term 'magic e' as they feel it can be confusing – the 'e' isn't magic, it's actually doing a job. That said, some teachers like the term as it gives a fun element to spelling, which children enjoy.

A **digraph** is **two letters (two vowels or two consonants or a vowel and a consonant) which together make one sound** (as in tail, boat, found or read).

When a digraph is split by a consonant it becomes a split digraph. For example:

- wrote – the 'o_e' here make one sound. The 'oe' digraph is split by the 't'
- lake – the 'a_e' here make one sound. The 'ae' digraph is split by the 'k'.
- complete – the 'e_e' here make one sound. The 'ee' digraph is split by the 't'.

When a 'magic e' end is added to certain three-letter words the 'e' reaches backwards over the consonant to change the sound of the vowel before it. For example, read the following words and notice the difference in the vowel sound:

Without 'magic e'	**With 'magic e'**
grip	gripe
rag	rage

slop	slope
hug	huge
pet	Pete

When saying the words with the ‘e’ you’ll note that the vowel sound has been changed. It’s become a long vowel sound as opposed to a shorter one.

So what is ‘silent e’?

The ‘magic e’ or ‘split digraph’ used to be known as a ‘silent e’, but the term has been largely replaced as the ‘e’ can’t be disregarded when reading in the same way that ‘k’ can in ‘know’, for instance.

However, there are some occasions when the ‘e’ at the end of the word could be considered silent – for example, in ‘come’. Think how differently we say ‘come’ to ‘cope’ – in ‘come’ the ‘e’ isn’t working its ‘magic’ and making a long vowel sound.

Adding a suffix – drop the ‘e’

An interesting spelling rule to learn about the ‘magic e’ is if you add a suffix that begins with a vowel then you usually take the ‘e’ away. For example:

No suffix	**Suffix**
like	liking
bake	baking
hope	hoping

If the suffix begins with a consonant (e.g. ‘ly’ or ‘less’), you leave the ‘e’ where it is:

No suffix	**Suffix**
wise	wisely
hope	hopeless

When do children learn about split digraphs in school?

From the time they’re beginning to read, children are likely to come across words

containing split digraphs. If your child goes to a school where they split children across the year groups and put them into ability groups for phonics, then your child could be learning this any time from the beginning of Year 1, but will continue to revise and learn the concept into Year 2.

How will my child learn about split digraphs?

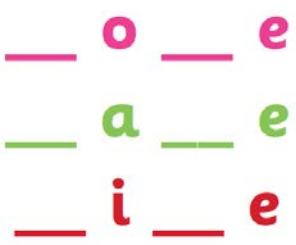
At school, your child will do various phonics activities and games to help enforce their understanding. In the last 10 years there has been a more visual and active approach in some phonics lessons; these are some of the kinds of phonics exercises they might do in the classroom.

1. The teacher might have three children at the front of the class each holding a letter (for example, Child 1: k, Child 2: i, Child 3: t). The class will be asked what this word says. The teacher might ask another to hold the letter ‘e’ and stand on the end, but holding hands with child 2. They might then have to sound out the word once more but, noting that as the ‘i’ and the ‘e’ are holding hands, say this as one sound – /ie/.

2. Another lesson might involve children each having mini-whiteboards and drawing two columns, one titled ‘oa’ and the other ‘o_e’. The teacher might say words such as “boat”, “code”, “coat” etc. and the children write the words how they think they’re spelled under the correct column. Using whiteboards can help the children to have a go even if unsure as they know they can change if needed.

3. Teachers might give children ‘missing gap’ sheets or cut-out word cards like these. Children will be asked to write the correct letters in the gaps to make these words, or say the three-letter word, then put the ‘e’ on the end and say the word again with the new vowel sound.

tap	not	kit
e	e	e



Standard English

Standard English is accepted as the "correct" form of English, used in formal speaking or writing. In primary school children are expected to learn to write according to the rules of Standard English.

Standard English is the variety of English which is used, with minor regional and national variations, as a world language.

The aim of the national curriculum is that everyone should be able to use Standard English as needed in writing and in relatively formal speaking.

Standard English may also be referred to as 'correct' English. It follows grammatical rules like subject-verb agreement and the correct use of verb tenses or pronouns, for example:

Non-Standard English: They ain't got nothing.
Standard English: They haven't got anything.

Non-Standard English: I love the player what scored.
Standard English: I love the player who scored.

Non-Standard English: We was there yesterday.
Standard English: We were there yesterday.

Non-Standard English: Pass me them books!
Standard English: Pass me those books!

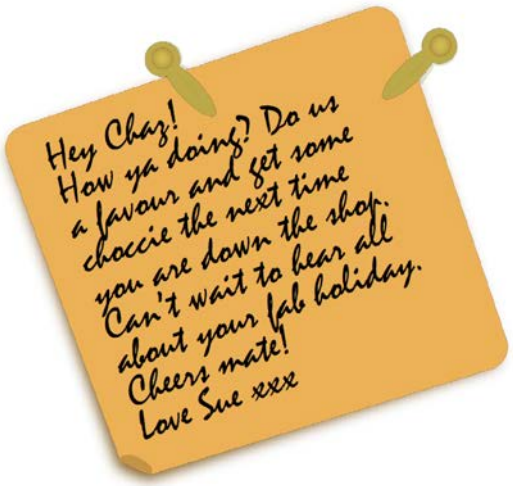
Non-Standard English: I played good.
Standard English: I played well.

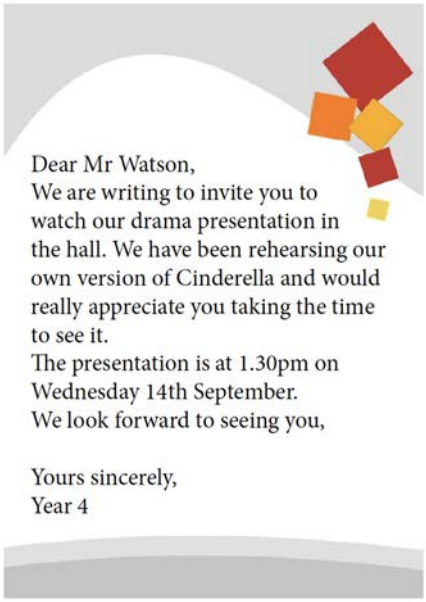
Primary-school grammar: Standard and non-Standard English

The curriculum states that in **KS1**: 'pupils should begin to use some of the distinctive features of Standard English in their writing'. Also, 'Reading and listening to whole books... helps pupils to increase their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, including their knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of Standard English.'

In **Years 3 and 4** children are taught some of the differences between Standard English and non-Standard English and apply what they have learned in their writing.

Children may also learn about **formal and informal language** at school. They may be asked to think about the difference between writing a note for a friend and a letter to their headteacher, for example:





Children may be asked to look at these two texts and discuss how they differ.

- The note uses shortened words with 'incorrect' spelling: 'ya', 'choccie' and 'fab'. It includes slang words and phrases: 'do us a favour' and 'cheers'. The writer signs off with an informal 'love' and adds kisses at the end.

- The letter on the right is written in Standard or formal English. The spelling, grammar and punctuation are all correct. The letter starts and ends formally, with 'Dear' and 'Yours sincerely'. No slang is used at all.

Are children tested on their understanding of Standard English?

When Y6 children sit their Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test, they may be asked to choose the correct word to put in a sentence so that it is written in Standard English, for example:

Rewrite the underlined words in the following sentence using Standard English.

We was really late for school and my mum weren't happy.

We were really late for school and my mum wasn't happy.

They might also be asked to rewrite sentences using more formal language.

Teachers will encourage the use of Standard English throughout a child's time at primary school by reading information and fiction books out loud, modelling writing on the board, speaking in Standard English and highlighting any uses of non-Standard English in their marking of each child's writing.

Register in language

The use of "formal" and Standard English also reflects a particular **register or style of speaking and writing.**

We use different registers when speaking to different audiences or in different contexts; different registers have different vocabulary (for example the words used by doctors or lawyers when speaking about their area of expertise) and are also more or less formal.

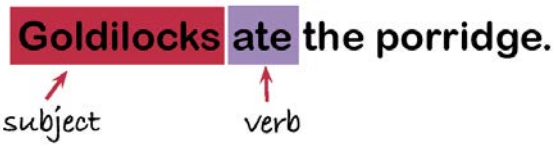
Statements

A parents' guide to statements, the most common sentence type, with information about how they are taught as part of the primary curriculum.

A statement is the most common type of sentence. There are three other sentence types: questions, exclamations and commands.

Statements are sentences that **express a fact, idea or opinion.** Statements do not ask questions, make requests or give commands. They are also not exclamations.

Statement sentences can be simple, compound or complex sentences; a sentence always consists of at least one clause containing a subject and a verb and nearly always ends in a full stop.



Goldilocks ate the porridge; the bears found her in their house.
subject verb subject verb

The first sentence above (*Goldilocks ate the porridge*) is a simple sentence; the second (*Goldilocks ate the porridge; the bears found her in their house.*) is a compound sentence.

How are statements taught in the primary classroom?

In Reception and Year 1, children will be encouraged to describe an object or a

picture verbally before attempting to write what they see. For example, if their class text is *The Gruffalo*, they will begin to compose and then write basic sentences describing the Gruffalo's appearance. For example:

The Gruffalo is furry. FACT
The Gruffalo looks scary. OPINION

In Year 1 and 2, children will experiment with different ways of starting their statement sentences, and adding more detail, but still expressing a fact, opinion or an idea. For example:

It was really dark in the woods.
She had a beautiful purple feather in her hat.
The magician is tall and has long, wavy hair.

In Key Stage 1, children will also be introduced to compound sentences, which use coordinating conjunctions to link parts of a sentence. Again, these can be made up of "yelling" (exclamation) and "asking" (question) sentence types as well as statements. As children progress through each year group and are exposed to different elements of English grammar, they will begin to use differing sentence types in their writing.

When are statements taught in primary school?

Statements are officially taught in Year 1, at the same time as children are taught the difference between 'yelling, telling and asking' sentences. However, many EYFS teachers introduce simple statement sentences when a child is in Reception.

As statement sentences form the basis of most written language, they are reinforced in all subsequent year groups.

In Key Stage 1 SATs children might be asked to punctuate sentences correctly to demonstrate that they understand the difference between statements, questions, exclamations and commands (see example below).

In the Year 6 SATs Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar paper they might be asked to demonstrate the same skill, as in the example question below.

Draw a line to match each sentence with its correct type.

The first one has been done for you.

How awful!	question
Be careful, the floor is very slippery.	command
I'm not feeling very well today so I'm staying at home.	statement
Did you enjoy your school trip to the museum?	exclamation

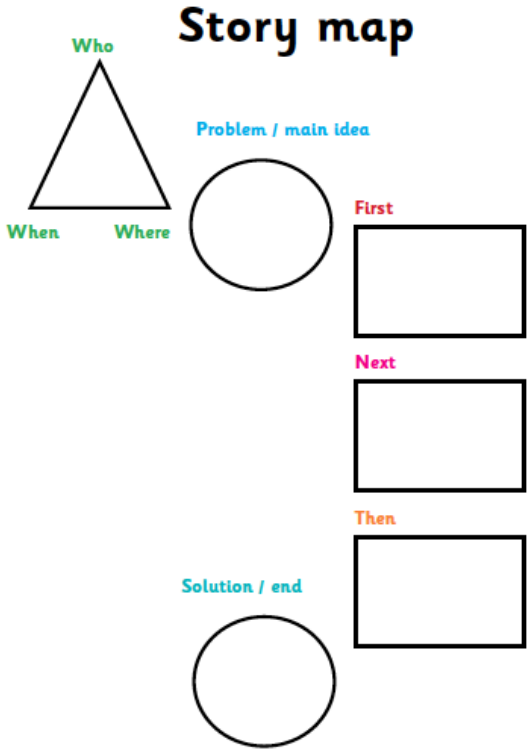
Story maps and story mountains

Your child will be taught to use different planning and analysis tools in primary literacy. Story maps, story flowcharts and story mountains are diagrams to help them think clearly about the plot and structure of what they're writing. We explain what parents need to know.

To **help children to understand the structure of a story** that is being studied in class, they may be encouraged to draw a story map.

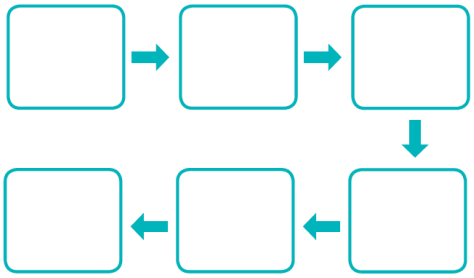
A teacher may give them a frame to work on, or they might give them a blank sheet of paper and ask them to draw it themselves. The idea is that the children are aware of the main events of the story and can remember how they are sequenced.

It is a good idea to encourage children to draw pictures on a story map, to help them to visualise the story. Teachers sometimes encourage them to include speech written within speech bubbles.



What is a story flowchart?

Similar to a story map is a story flowchart which may be set out as follows:



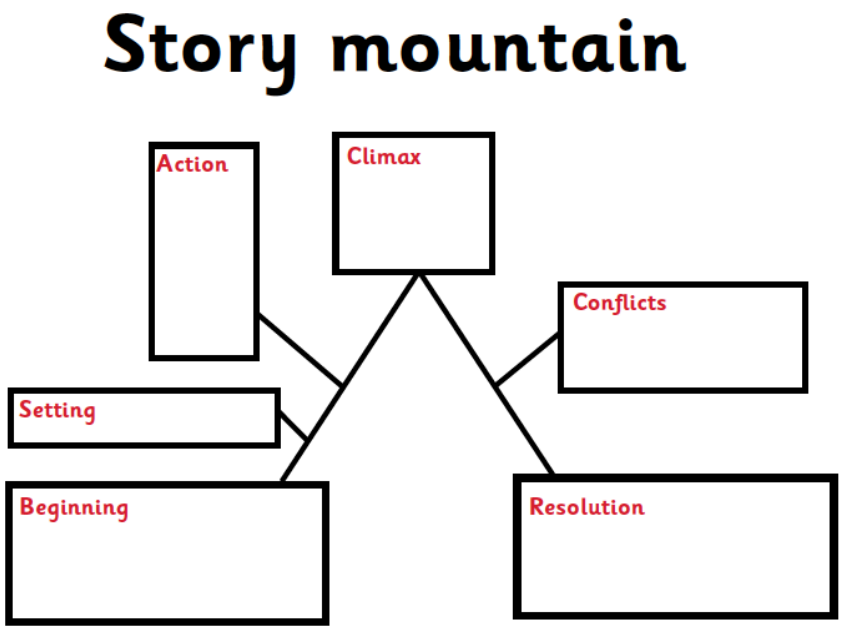
What is a story mountain?

A story mountain is another tool to help children to understand story structure.

The benefit of using a story mountain diagram to analyse text is that it enables children to understand that some stories often start with a description of setting and characters and then start to build up the action. **Around the middle of the story**

there is often a problem where something exciting or scary happens. This is known as the climax of the story. There then needs to be a resolution of this problem and then a suitable ending to round off the story.

1. Description of setting / characters
2. Build up to the action
3. Climax
4. Resolution
5. Ending



When marking a child's story map, mountain or flowchart, teachers check whether a child has understood that the idea of this process is to remember the main events of a story without including all the detail. Children are expected to write in note form, rather than full sentences, when completing a diagram like this.

How are story maps used in the primary classroom?

Teachers often ask children to plan their own stories using maps, flowcharts or mountains. This helps them to think clearly about the plot and structure of their story, and how they plan to divide it into different paragraphs, before they start writing. It can also greatly improve the quality of their writing if they mimic the structure of a story they have read and enjoyed.

When working on non-fiction texts it's more common for children to use spider diagrams to organise their ideas and make notes.

Story setting

Every story has a setting. In KS1 and KS2, children learn to analyse story settings in other people's writing before using the same techniques in their own fiction writing.

A story setting is the location in which a story takes place. The setting could be a school, someone's home, a witch's lair or Mars!

How are story settings taught in school?

Teachers follow units suggested by the literacy framework. Many of these units have a particular setting as a focus, for example: a familiar setting, a fantasy world or a historical setting. A teacher will choose an engaging story to read the children and they will then look at how the setting is described in the story. For example, they might read the following description:

Agatha sat gloomily on the old, rickety wooden chair that squeaked every time she moved. The desk felt grainy and chalky under her sweaty palms. There were three other children in detention, who scribbled manically on their papers and did not dare look up for a second. A grey-faced teacher with dark eyes stared at her. His skin seemed as thin as dusty paper and she was scared to hold his gaze for more than a second. The walls were yellowed with age and the paint was peeling and cracking like dry earth. A disgusting smell of boiled cabbage was coming from the corridor.

- Here a teacher might ask the class to think of a word to sum up the mood of the setting; replies might include: 'dismal', 'depressing', 'scary', 'miserable'. The class might then be asked to actually pick out words and phrases from the text to back up their opinion.

- The teacher might also draw attention to the fact that we are given a feel for four senses: sight, sound, touch and smell. Children might be asked to find references to each of these four senses.

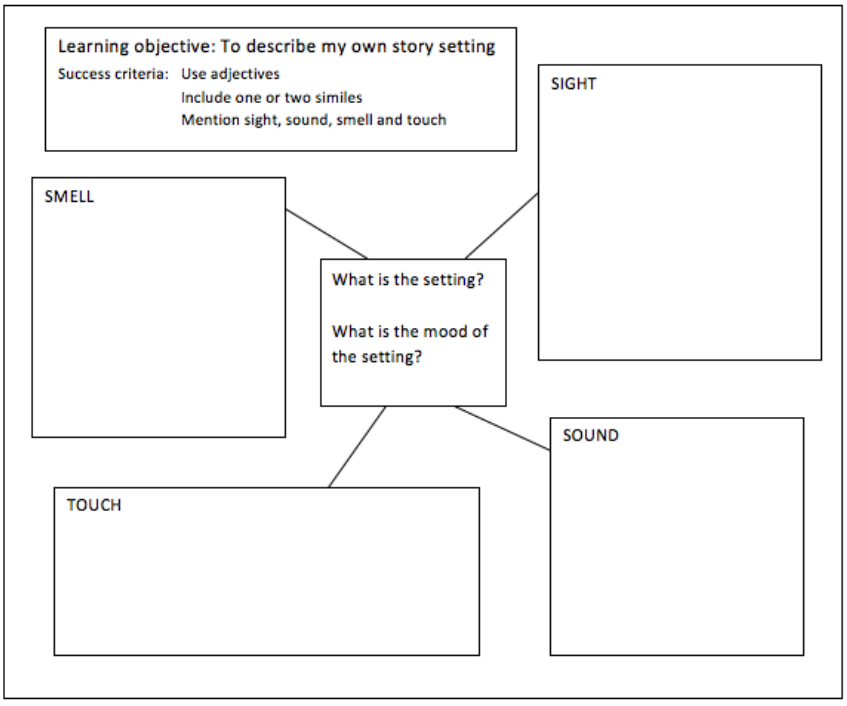
- The teacher may also pick up on the use of similes and see if the children can spot them ('skin seemed as thin as dusty paper' and 'paint was peeling and cracking like dry earth'). They might be asked why these similes are effective.

In asking these questions, the teacher is making the class aware of how an author creates a mood in their writing. The next step is to encourage the children to do the same in their writing.

How do children use story settings in their writing?

A teacher will spend a few days reading the story to the children and giving them tasks that help to deepen their understanding of it. This could include drawing a story map or mountain, writing descriptions of characters and drama tasks.

When the children are ready to write their own version of the story, the teacher will encourage them to **plan their story** first. They might then be asked to draw spider diagrams for each character on which to write notes about what they look like and how they behave. Another good activity would be for them to draw a picture of the setting of their story and then write notes. At this point, the teacher would want to encourage them to think about how the author had described setting and to use the same strategies themselves. They might be given a spider diagram to prompt them:



The point of this activity is to make children think about describing a setting in a story, rather than rushing ahead and simply describing the action (a common reaction!). When describing the setting, the children would be asked to refer to the diagram and offer a full and detailed description.

Subjunctive

Your child will learn about the subjunctive form as part of the Year 6 grammar curriculum. We explain what KS2 parents need to know about this verb form and how to recognise and use it correctly.

What is the subjunctive?

The subjunctive is a verb form or mood used to express things that could or should happen. It is used to express wishes, hopes, commands, demands or suggestions. For example:

If I were you I'd accept.
I suggested that he face up to the bully.
It is vital that she attend the meeting.
I wish I were able to fly.
I suggest you take a rain coat with you.
I demand that they be counted again!

The subjunctive is the same as the (indicative) verbs we use in almost every case, but it is **different in the third person singular and when using the verb to be.** For the subjunctive we remove the final s at the end of the verb, so

I request that he write to her (instead of he writes to her)

In the subjunctive we use the forms I were and they be, so

I wish I were able to fly (instead of I was)

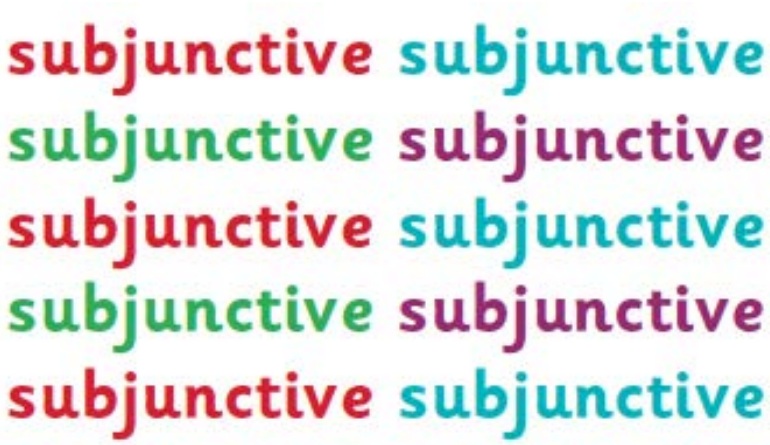
She asked that they be told immediately (instead of they were told).

The subjunctive isn't used in English very often. Nowadays it is usually replaced by modal verbs like might, could or should, but it does survive in traditional expressions like 'come what may', 'perish the thought' or 'God save the Queen'.

What are children taught about the subjunctive at primary school?

Children are not taught the subjunctive until **Y6**. In order to be able to recognise it they might look at a list of verbs and expressions that use the subjunctive.

- to advise
- to ask
- to demand
- to insist
- to recommend
- to suggest
- It is best
- It is important
- It is vital
- It is a good / bad idea



What subjunctive questions might children be asked in the KS2 SPAG test?

The subjunctive might appear in the Year 6 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test. For example, with a question similar to the following:

Complete the sentence below so it uses the subjunctive form.

If I _____ the Prime Minister, I would make ice-cream free.

Answer: *were*

How will the subjunctive be taught in the classroom?

Teachers might help children to learn about the subjunctive in the following ways:

Asking them to underline sentences containing the subjunctive in a text.

Asking them to write sentences based on a particular situation, for example: Write a sentence, using the subjunctive, that expresses what you want to have for lunch.

Giving them various sentences in the present and future tense and asking them to convert them to the subjunctive.

Success criteria/WILF

Find out what success criteria (also known as the 'WILF') are and how your child's teacher will use success criteria to boost learning focus.

A success criteria is a list of features that a teacher wants the children to include in their work during the course of a lesson. It is a really good way of making children aware of what is expected of them and can also encourage them to extend themselves during the course of the lesson.

Sometimes the success criteria is called the 'WILF' ('What I'm Looking For…'). This is a more child-friendly alternative!

Success criteria in literacy

Teachers will not use success criteria for every lesson and it is more commonly used in literacy lessons, especially when a child is doing a piece of writing, for example:

Learning objective: To write about Theseus's journey into the maze

Success criteria: Describe the maze using sight, sound, touch and smell. Use capitals and full stops in the right places.

This may be written on the board at the start of the lesson; the teacher will then carry out a shared writing session where he or she will model how to include the senses in their description of the maze and alert children's attention to using capital letters and full stops.

It is important that the success criteria can be seen by children throughout the lesson (either left on the board or on printed pieces of paper which they have on their tables). Teachers may stop the children every fifteen minutes or so, to remind them about the success criteria and possibly ask them to look back in their work to check they have included these elements in their work.

Success criteria is an important tool in encouraging children to focus their learning and prompting them to think about the elements they are including.

Suffixes

Suffixes are word endings. Children learn suffixes and how to use them to help them improve their spelling and understanding of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

A suffix is a string of letters that go at the end of a root word, changing or adding to its meaning. Suffixes can show if a word is a noun, an adjective, an adverb or a verb.

The suffixes -er and -est are also used to form the comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and some adverbs.

Prefixes are groups of letters added to the beginning of a word.

What suffixes will your child learn in KS1 and KS2?

	Suffix	Example word	Explanation
Year 1	*-ing*	*jumping*	In Year 1, children learn about suffixes that are added without changing the root word.
	-ed	*jumped*	
	-er	*grander*	
	-est	*grandest*	
Year 2	*-ied*	*copied*	Children learn that to add some suffixes, you have to change the root word. For example, 'pat' has to have another 't' added before the suffix '-ed' can be added. 'Copy' has to have the 'y' removed before '-ied' is added.
	-ier	*copier*	
	-ing	*patting*	
	-ing	*hiking*	
	-ed	*patted*	
	-ed	*hiked*	
	-er	*sadder*	

	-est	*saddest*	
	-ment	*enjoyment*	
	-ness	*sadness*	
	-ful	*playful*	
	-ly	*badly*	
Years 3 and 4	*-ation*	*information*	Children continue to learn that some suffixes change the root word, for example, happy becomes happily, and gentle because gently.
	-ly	*merrily*	
	-ous	*enormous*	
Year 5	*-ology*	*archaeology*	Children learn that 'ology' means 'study,' 'graph' means 'to write' and 'port' means 'carry.'
	-graph	*autograph*	
	-port	*transport*	
Year 6	*-ing*	*referring*	Sometimes a letter has to be added before a suffix can be added.
	-ed	*referred*	

Why are children taught suffixes?

Children are taught the meanings of different suffixes (for example, -ette means 'small'). Then they will look at words with these suffixes and how that meaning is incorporated into the word, for example: a cigarette is a small version of a cigar, a maisonette is smaller than a house (they may be told that 'maison' is French for house). This 'breaking down' of words helps children to understand the meaning of other words and to think carefully about how these words are spelled.

Teaching children words with suffixes means that they are broadening their

vocabulary by learning new words and their meanings, which they can then incorporate into their writing. It also means that they are learning new spellings.

Verb, noun, adjective and adverb suffixes

Teaching groups of words with one suffix can be a good way of teaching children about adjectives, verbs and adverbs.

Common **verb suffixes** are -ed and -ing.
Common **noun suffixes** are -ness and -ment.
Common **adjective suffixes** are -al and -able.
Common **adverb suffixes** are -ly and -fully.

Children may also be taught about **comparatives and superlatives** and how they are formed using suffixes (for example, small, smaller and smallest).

Suffix spelling rules

Adding a suffix to some words changes the spelling of the new word. Children are taught the rules attached to certain suffixes. For example:

- For the suffix -er, the spelling changes according to the root word.
- If it ends in a 'y' like happy, the 'y' is taken off and -ier is added.
- If it is a word with a short vowel ending in one consonant (hot, sad, fit), the last word is doubled before -er is added: hotter, sadder, fitter.

How do children learn about suffixes?

It is quite common for a teacher to choose one particular suffix and then give a list of spellings with that suffix for the children to learn. Other ways to learn suffixes are Look, Cover, Write, Check, 'Fill the gap' worksheets, or asking children to find words with a certain suffix and look up their meanings (in a dictionary).

angelic static dynamic epidemic
musician magician politician
ruthless hopeless penniless joyless
friendship fellowship companionship
caution expedition petition sedition

Syllables

Syllables explained for parents, including details of how primary-school children are taught to identify syllables to help them with spelling and reading and understanding poetry.

A syllable is a single, unbroken sound of a spoken (or written) word. Syllables usually contain a vowel and accompanying consonants. Sometimes syllables are referred to as the 'beats' of spoken language.

Syllables differ from phonemes in that a phoneme is the smallest unit of sound; the number of syllables in a word is unrelated to the number of phonemes it contains. For example: /b/, /k/, /t/, /ch/, /sh/, /ee/, /ai/, /igh/, /ear/ are all phonemes. The word 'chat' is made up of three phonemes (/ch/ /a/ /t/). The word 'light' is made up of three phonemes (/l/ /igh/ /t/). However, both the words 'chat' and 'light' have only one syllable each.

The number of times you hear a vowel (a, e, i , o, u) in a word is equal to the number of syllables a word has. A good way to identify syllables is to think about whether you need to change your mouth shape to say the next bit of the word / the new syllable.

Learning about syllables in primary school

Learning about syllables is part of learning how to decode and spell words. It helps children understand the conventions of English spelling, including when to double letters and how to pronounce the vowels in words they might not have seen before.

Teachers will often get children to clap out the syllables of a word, to help them to understand the concept. (A good game to introduce syllables is to ask each child to stand up and say their name, while clapping out the syllables.) For example:

Cat has **one syllable** (words of one syllable are **monosyllabic)**

Water has **two syllables** (wa / ter)

Computer has **three syllables** (com / pu / ter)

Category has **four syllables** (cat / e / gor / y)

Syllables in KS1 English

Children in Key Stage 1 will be expected to read words of two syllables. They may be shown how to split the words up into syllables, in order to help them sound them out. For example: if they are shown the word 'thunder' and get stuck, a teacher may cover the second half of the word ('der') and ask them to just sound out the first syllable. Once they have managed this, they uncover the rest of the word and ask them to sound this out.

Children in Key Stage 1 will also learn to spell words with two syllables, at which point they will be encouraged to separate the two syllables themselves, in order to learn the spelling of the whole word.

Syllables in KS2 English

During Key Stage 2, children will progress to learning the spellings of words containing four syllables (or possibly more). They also learn about the use of syllables in poetry.

Children may learn about syllables through writing haikus. A haiku is a Japanese poem with three lines, the first containing 5 syllables, the second containing 7 syllables and the third containing 5 syllables. This is a haiku about a frog:

Wet amphibian,

Gulps, blinks and flicks out his tongue

To snatch a black fly.

Writing haikus encourages children to think about syllables, but also to think very carefully about their word choices – it may be that one word has too many syllables and does not fit, so they have to think of a new, similar word that fits the given criteria.

Another poetic form based on syllable number is the limerick (the first, second and fifth lines rhyme and have the same number of syllables, usually eight or nine).

syllable syllable syllable syllable syllable
syllable syllable syllable syllable syllable
syllable syllable syllable syllable syllable
syllable syllable syllable syllable syllable

Synonyms and antonyms

We explain what synonyms and antonyms are and how children are taught to use synonyms to improve their writing in primary school.

Synonyms are words with the same or similar meanings.
For example, 'joyful' is a synonym for 'happy'.

What is an antonym?

Words with opposite meanings are called antonyms.

For example, 'miserable' is an antonym of 'happy'.

How are synonyms and antonyms taught in primary school?

Throughout their time at primary school, **children will be encouraged to think of more interesting words to replace 'boring' adjectives** such as 'happy,' 'sad' and 'scared'. It is really important that their vocabulary widens rapidly, so that they are able to make their writing as rich and engaging as possible. Knowing plenty of synonyms for common words is a big part of this. For example, if a child wants to write that a character in their story is scared, their writing will make much more of an impact if they run through a list of words similar to scared and then decide on the one they think works the best, such as terrified, anxious, petrified, apprehensive, fearful, jittery, nervous.

	Synonyms	Antonyms
Young	Youthful, juvenile	Mature, adult
Increase	Add, grow	Decrease, shrink
Lethargic	Lazy, sluggish	Energetic, lively
Vast	Huge, enormous	Tiny, minute
Love	Adore, worship	Hate, detest
Genuine	Real, authentic	Fake, bogus
Dawn	Sunrise, daybreak	Dusk, twilight

As outlined in the national curriculum (revised in 2014), **children in Year 6 learn the term 'synonym' and what it means.**

Teachers encourage this expansion of vocabulary in the following ways:

• Providing children with laminated word banks on their tables. Children may be given a lists of synonyms to support them in improving their writing; for example, they may have a list of words that could be used instead of 'said' such as: whispered, shouted, screamed, replied, babbled, agreed, boasted.

• As a class, compiling lists of interesting vocabulary and making it part of the class display so children are constantly exposed to good vocabulary. For example: a teacher might have a list of words similar but more interesting than 'walked', such as: trudged, scuttled, scurried, stomped, sprinted, tiptoed.

• Giving children a **thesaurus (a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms)** in which to look up words to improve their vocabulary. Teachers may give children this activity after they have completed a piece of writing. They may ask them to go through and underline all the adjectives and then look up alternative, better words.

• Word activities, where children are given word cards with various groups of synonyms which they have to put into groups according to meaning.

The more children are exposed to a good range of vocabulary the more likely they are to use it in their writing on a regular basis.

Synonyms and antonyms in verbal reasoning

Finding synonyms and antonyms of words is part of verbal reasoning and children taking the 11+ exam are likely to be asked to work out lists of specific synonyms and antonyms in Cloze-test-style question types.

synonym antonym synonym antonym synonym
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Talk partners

Find out what a talk partner is and why having a talk partner will benefit your child's learning in the classroom.

Using 'talk partners' in a lesson means a teacher asks a question and then asks the class to discuss their answer to the question with a partner. Teachers are now encouraged to use talk partners as often as they can, as it is believed the benefits are as follows:

- **Children are actively engaged in a lesson.** If they are not required to talk about what the teacher is saying it is quite possible they are not thinking about what is being asked.

- Children are **given time to think about a question and properly formulate an answer.** Sometimes children need to talk about something before being able to give a good answer.

- **Children are given confidence by discussing an idea with a peer first.** They may be unsure of their answer until they have a chance to talk it over and put their thoughts into words.

- If teachers rely only on children raising hands to give answers, it is common to find that the same few children raise their hands each time. After children have talked about something in a pair, a teacher can choose a pair to offer what they have discussed, without waiting for them to put their hands up. This means that the quieter children who may not normally offer contributions are encouraged to speak up.

Text-marking

Text-marking is a technique taught in schools to help children recognise the different features of a text. Find out how teachers explain the technique to children and how it can help with their comprehension of different types of written content.

Children are often asked to text-mark in literacy. This means **highlighting, circling, underlining or labelling features of a text.** The purpose of this is to make children aware of how different texts are set out and which features are used.

Text-marking would usually be done at the beginning of a unit of work, with the purpose of familiarising the children with a particular type of text.

For example: a child may be given a recount in the form of a newspaper article and then asked to do the following:

Dog saves diamonds!

Shoppers on Oxford Circus were today amazed to witness a diamond robbery stopped in its tracks by none other than a three-month-old Jack Russell puppy.

At 3pm today, three masked men entered Diamond Dreams, a jewellery store just off busy Oxford Circus. All three men had guns which they pointed at shop assistant Julie Wells.

"I was terrified. These men are appalling characters who should be locked up," said Julie of the experience. "The man in front of me shoved a bag into my hands and told me to fill it with jewellery."

Reggie the Jack Russell

The burglars were then startled to hear that the alarm had been pressed. "They knew it wasn't me," said Julie, "because they had watched me putting the jewellery in the bag."

What they didn't realise, was that another customer had brought his puppy, Reggie, into the shop with him. During the commotion, Reggie had run for cover under the shop counter.

As luck would have it, he managed to tread on the red alarm button designed for emergencies with his back paw.

Within seconds police had arrived and the burglars were arrested and taken to a police station. They will be sentenced next week.

Reggie's owner, John Priestly, said: "I wouldn't normally take Reggie shopping, but my girlfriend, Dawn, was out and I didn't want to leave him alone in the house. I was actually buying an engagement ring for Dawn at the time. This will be a great story to tell at our wedding."

- Highlight the headline in yellow
- Circle the columns
- Highlight the caption in blue
- Put a box around the last paragraph
- Highlight any time connectives in red

This activity would usually follow a session where a teacher would have shown the children various recount newspaper articles and then discussed the features with them. The purpose of the task would be to see if they were able to pick out the features for themselves. Text-marking each feature in a different colour would make the teacher aware of whether the children had understood the task or not.

Text-marking can also be done with fiction texts. For example: a teacher may want the children to take an in-depth look at one particular character in a story. They may give them a passage like the following and ask them to:

- Highlight description of the woman in yellow

- Highlight her speech in purple
- Highlight the man's reactions to her in blue

This activity encourages children to think about what in the text constitutes description. They also need to think about the fact that speech is always presented in speech marks and consider what the word 'reaction' means.

The mysterious woman sailed like a galleon into the room. Her dress was a gushing waterfall of blue silk and stars glittered at her throat. As she stepped into the room, many heads turned to look at her. A tall man stood in the corner, as stiff and motionless as an old oak, a dark cloud of misery over his head. He frowned and turned to face away from her.
"Mr Mayhew!" she exclaimed, walking across the room and extending her gloved hand to him.
He took her hand and felt the silk of her glove, as soft as feathers, against his rough palm. He did not want to fall under this woman's spell, but he already felt himself bewitched.
"Hello, Madam," he said coolly, as if he had never met her before.
"Don't you recognise me, you silly fool?" she asked, knowing perfectly well the answer to that question.
He pretended he couldn't grasp what she was saying. "I'm sorry Madam, you appear to have mistaken me for someone else."
Undeterred, she continued. "I don't think so, Mr Mayhew!" she replied, determined to have the man in the palm of her hand.

The next step after this would be to start to infer information about the woman and the man and come to some conclusions about what sort of person she is and what their relationship is. They may be asked to make deductions about what has happened in the past or what may be about to happen in the story.

Text-marking in numeracy

Text-marking can also be used in numeracy when tackling word problems. A teacher may show children a word problem like the following:

I have 340 marbles. I share them equally between 5 friends. How many marbles does each friend get?

The teacher may ask the children to **highlight the words that show the operation that needs carrying out for this problem.** (In this case you would expect them to highlight the words 'share them equally'.)

Teachers often need to spend some time going over language related to different mathematical operations before children are confident with this.

Why are children taught text-marking?

Text-marking is a useful activity as, instead of just reading a passage of text and discussing it, children are required to make their understanding of the text explicit by the use of markings which are visual. These **visual markings help to make certain aspects of the text clearer** to them, and help the teacher check their understanding.

Time connectives

Find out how your child's teacher will explain the concept of time connectives and how your child will be encouraged to use them to improve their writing.

Time connectives are words or phrases which are used to tell a reader WHEN something is happening. They are sometimes called temporal connectives. For example:

***This morning**, I ate fried bananas for breakfast.*

Connectives can be conjunctions, prepositions or adverbs. Under the new primary curriculum children learn to refer to connectives using the correct grammatical terms (conjunction, preposition and adverb) rather than the umbrella term 'connectives'.

Other time connectives include:

first, last, next, then, finally, eventually, this evening, last week, after a while, soon afterwards, meanwhile

These connectives often appear at the beginning of a sentence, which may also be the beginning of a paragraph. We are used to seeing connectives in the middle of a sentence, connecting two parts of the sentence, but in the case of time connectives, they may be connecting one section of text to another. For example: in this passage, the word 'Finally' would not make sense without the information that came before it:

***This morning**, I ate fried bananas for breakfast, then I had some blueberry pancakes. **While** taking the bus to school, I read my comic. **Finally,** we reached the school gates.*

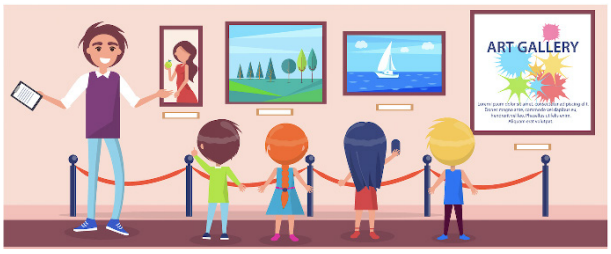
Using time connectives in primary-school writing

Children are encouraged to use time connectives when writing stories. There are also various non-fiction texts that feature time connectives, such as: instruction texts, recounts and explanation texts. All of these texts involve a number of things happening in a particular order, which is why time connectives are appropriate

for connecting different sections of text. An **instruction text** may include time connectives as follows:

***First**, melt the butter and sugar in a pan. **Next**, mix the oats, flour and spices.*

Here is an extract from a **recount** of a child's trip to a museum, which contains time connectives:



Early on Monday we got onto the coach and made our way to London. The journey was really fun! The coach driver put some music on and we all sang along while looking at all the sights. An hour later, we arrived at the museum.

This extract from an **explanation text** includes time connectives to explain how the Egyptians mummified bodies:

1. First the brain was removed. This was done by putting a hook up the person's nose.

2. After that, all the internal organs were removed and put into decorative jars called canopic jars. The heart was left in the body, because it was believed that the dead person would need to take this with them to the afterlife.

Teachers encourage children to use time connectives by:

- Pointing out time connectives when reading various texts, or encouraging children to see if they can find any time connectives in texts they are reading.
- Verbal activities which encourage children to use time connectives in spoken sentences. For example: giving children a time connective, such as 'this morning' and then asking them to continue the sentence in their own way.
- Modelling writing using time connectives on the board during shared writing.
- Including written reminders to use time connectives when marking a child's work.
- Putting time connectives on display in the classroom to remind children to include them in their writing.

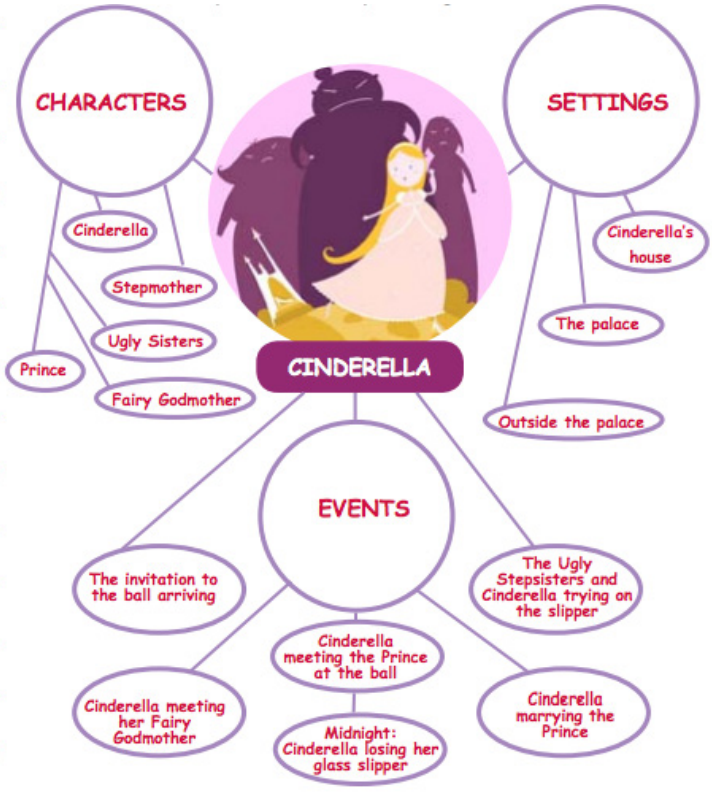
Traditional tales

Traditional tales like Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks play an important part in early literacy. We explain how these well-known stories are used to help develop reading comprehension and early writing skills, and explain how you can help your child's learning with fairy tales at home.

A traditional tale is a story that has been told and re-told for many years, and consequently, becomes a story that almost everyone knows. Traditional tales are also referred to as fairy stories or fairy tales. Stories such as Cinderella, Goldilocks and the Three Bears and Jack and the Beanstalk are all traditional stories.

How do traditional tales and fables differ?

A fable is a story that features animals, plants or forces of nature and ends with a 'moral'.



Traditional tales in primary school

In both KS1 and 2, **teachers will often use a traditional story as a way of teaching children the conventions of story-writing.**

In Key Stage 1, a teacher would read children various traditional tales and discuss the structure in terms of beginning, middle and end. They might map out the structure on the board to make this clear to the children; for example, they might show three boxes (organised horizontally or vertically) and then write a short sentence in each to show what happens in the beginning, middle and end of the story. Over time the children might progress to analysing the story structure by using a story map or a spider diagram.

To bring the story alive to the children, teachers might ask them to carry out various drama activities, such as acting out the story with puppets or 'hot-seating' (where one person sits on a chair pretending to be a character from a story and other children in the class ask them questions).

They might introduce the story to children in different forms, for example: watching a film or television adaptation or reading a play script. Children would then be asked to re-tell the story orally, using picture or note prompts. Finally, they would be asked to re-write the story in their own words.

In Key Stage 2 teachers would be less likely to use puppets and picture prompts, but would follow a similar teaching sequence, with plenty of opportunities for drama and story re-telling. Traditional tales might also be used to help children reflect on more advanced writing techniques, such as point of view (lots of fairy tales read completely differently when written from a different point of view; look at *Honestly, Red Riding Hood was Rotten!: The Story of Little Red Riding Hood as Told by the Wolf*) or the difference between fact and opinion.

Traditional tales at home: how you can help your child

You can help your child at home by reading traditional stories with them and encouraging them to talk about what they have read. (We also love the huge repository of free traditional audiotales on Storynory if you'd like to listen too!)

Ask them plenty of questions about the characters to help develop their reading comprehension, including questions where retrieval of information is required ('What did Cinderella leave behind at the ball?') as well as questions that rely on inference ('How can you tell that the ugly sisters don't like Cinderella?') and also questions that rely on deduction ('How do you think Cinderella feels about being left at home?').

All of this exploration of characters' feelings helps children to think more deeply about the characters that they write about, so can really help them with their writing as well as their reading comprehension.

Trigraphs

Your child will be taught about trigraphs as part of their phonics learning journey. We explain how teachers introduce trigraphs to children and how you can reinforce learning at home.

A trigraph is a **single sound that is represented by three letters**, for example:

In the word ‘match’, the three letters ‘tch’ at the end make only one sound.

Other examples of trigraphs are:

igh *as in sigh*

ore *as in bore*

air *as in fair*

ear *as in dear*

are *as in dare*

All the trigraphs above are taught to children in **Year 1.**

Teaching methods vary as to how these are taught, but the process may go as follows. A teacher may choose a trigraph to focus on for a few days, for example: tch. They may start by writing a word on the board: ‘match’ and asking children to say it out loud. They may then underline the letters ‘tch’ and encourage the children to make this noise.

The children may then be asked to do a number of activities of the week. These might include any of the following:

1. Simply writing the letters ‘tch’ on their own mini-whiteboard, to practise forming the letters in order and joining them together.

2. Being given some cut-up words cards, some with ‘tch’ on the end and some with an ending they have learnt previously, such as: ‘ck’, for example:

clock	**match**	**rock**	**sock**
catch	**snatch**	**tick**	**stack**

Children would then be instructed to put the words into two groups, according to their endings.

3. Fill-the-gaps worksheets, where children are given a picture and then a word with the ending missing, for example:

ha_ _ _ (hatch)

4. Cut-up phonics cards, where children have to put phonemes together to make a word, for example, children could make the words hatch, catch, witch and latch with the following cards:

h a c a

w i l a

ear air ure

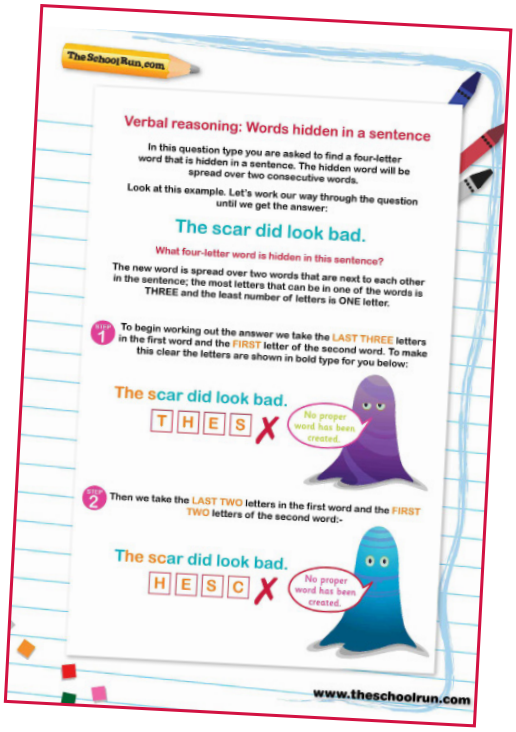
eau igh tch

ear air ure

eau igh tch

Verbal reasoning

Verbal reasoning tests are a key part of most secondary school selection and 11+ exams, as well as Year 7 CATs – but your child won't necessarily be taught the skill at school. We explain what verbal reasoning involves.



Verbal reasoning is, in a nutshell, thinking with words. 'As the name suggests, it's a form of problem-solving based around words and language,' explains Stephen McConkey, a headteacher and author of the Learning Together practice books. It involves thinking about text, solving word problems, following written instructions to come up with a solution, spotting letter sequences and cracking letter- and number-based codes. Verbal reasoning exams are intended to test a child's ability to understand and reason using words, and are a test of skill, rather than of learned knowledge. The theory is that they allow the examining body to build a picture of a child's potential for critical thinking, problem-solving and ultimately, intelligence.

What sort of questions are involved?

'It's generally agreed that there are 21 standard types of verbal reasoning question,' says Stephen. These include:

- Finding one letter that will complete two words, e.g. hoo (D) oor
- Finding a word hidden inside another word, e.g. dePENd
- Spotting the odd ones out in a list of words, e.g. apple, pear, banana, CREAM, PUDDING
- Finding the words that mean the same from two lists, e.g. PLAIN/expensive/rich and SIMPLE/money/earnings
- Finding antonyms (opposites) from two lists of words, e.g IN/on/over and through/between/OUT

• Breaking a code where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a different letter or number (e.g. A becomes B, B becomes C, C becomes D, so that 'cat' would be written 'dbu')

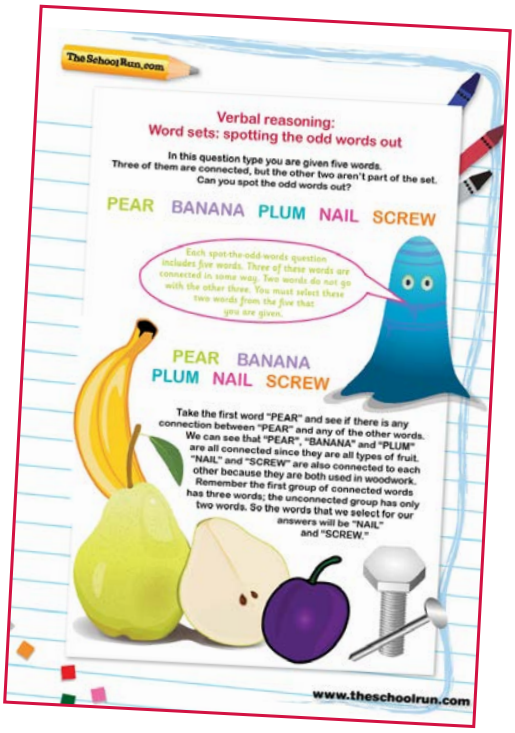
'Although the majority of verbal reasoning tests are word-based, some are based on numbers,' adds Stephen. For instance, a verbal reasoning exam could include questions where you have to give the next number in a sequence (1, 5, 9, 13…), or where you have to solve a sum where the numbers are represented by letters (so if A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4 and so on, C+A=4). These questions require a basic grounding in maths, but the main principle is the same as for word-based verbal reasoning problems: to test your child's ability to solve problems based on written instructions.

What skills and knowledge do children need for verbal reasoning tests?

'Children perform best in verbal reasoning tests if they're widely read and have an extensive vocabulary,' says Stephen. They need a solid grasp of synonyms (words that have the same meaning), antonyms (words that mean the opposite of each other) and plurals, good spelling skills, and strong maths skills. 'A good general knowledge is also needed for verbal reasoning tests,' Stephen adds. Even if your child understands the question and can follow the written directions, if one of the possible words in the answer is unfamiliar, they may trip up.

Can verbal reasoning be hard to master?

Some children have a knack for verbal reasoning, but for others, it doesn't come so naturally. And it's not just about being 'good at literacy' – children who can read and spell very well may still struggle with some of the code-based questions. Moreover, verbal reasoning isn't a curriculum-based skill, so your child won't be taught the techniques at school, and while they may make sense once they've been explained (and practised), at first glance, they can be baffling.



Children also need to be good at reading questions carefully, and following the

directions exactly, which can be an issue for those who tend to rush or skim-read. 'However, research shows that with practice, children can improve their verbal reasoning,' says Stephen.

Helping your child practise verbal reasoning at home

'The best thing you can do to improve your child's verbal reasoning is encourage them to read,' says Stephen. 'Children who read widely have a big head-start, as they're building their vocabulary and general knowledge.'

You can also try the following tips to boost your child's verbal reasoning skills:

- Play word games and quizzes, for example, spotting the odd one out from a list of words, giving a synonym or antonym for a word, solving anagrams.

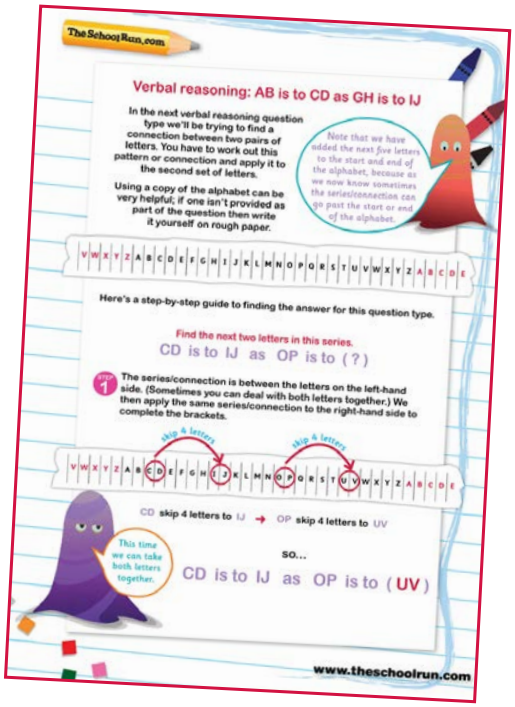
- Encourage your child to do crosswords and word searches, and play games like Hangman.

- Play word-based family games like Scrabble and Boggle.

- Set your child spelling challenges, focusing particularly on commonly misspelt words (there/their/they're) and homophones (words that sound the same but are spelt differently, like fair and fare).

- Become a family of culture vultures, taking your children to museums, shows and exhibitions to build their general knowledge.

To help your child practise verbal and non-verbal reasoning for the Year 7 CATs or the 11+, check TheSchoolRun.com for practice worksheets and activities.



Verbs and powerful verbs

Using powerful, descriptive verbs can make a big difference to your child's writing. We explain what parents need to know about powerful verbs (and ordinary verbs!) when helping with primary-school homework.

A verb is a doing word. A verb expresses a physical action, a mental action or a state of being. For example:

*Katy **juggled** with five apples.*

*The man **daydreams** in the park.*

*I **am** happy at school.*

Verb tenses in writing

Verbs change according to the tense of a sentence (whether the events described occurred in the past, are happening in the present or will take place in the future):

PAST TENSE: *I jogged to the supermarket.*

PRESENT TENSE: *I jog to the supermarket.* OR *I am jogging to the supermarket.* (Present continuous)

FUTURE TENSE: *I will jog to the supermarket.*

Children need to be encouraged to **use the correct verb tenses when writing different texts.**

When writing a fiction text, they need to make sure that their verbs are consistently in the past or consistently in the present.

When writing instructions, an information text, a report or an explanation, the tense usually needs to be in the present.

Recounts, autobiographies and biographies are usually written in the past.

Journalistic writing, persuasive writing and argument texts can be a mixture of tenses.

Teachers do not usually explicitly teach children how to make verbs agree with

subjects or how to change them to show past, present or future tense. Children are usually expected to pick this up through listening, speaking and reading. Verb tenses are corrected by teachers in the drafting and re-drafting process of a child's writing.

Powerful verbs in primary school

At primary school, teachers will persuade and encourage children, as much as possible, to **use powerful verbs rather than ordinary verbs**. For example:

Verb	Powerful verbs
said	whispered, mentioned, whined, shouted, cried, exclaimed
walked	shuffled, meandered, stomped, marched, tiptoed, sashayed

Teachers will encourage children to use powerful verbs in a number of ways:

- A section of the classroom display where really good powerful verbs are 'gathered' by children for future use.
- Giving children word banks of powerful verbs to refer to when they are writing.
- Modelling the use of powerful verbs when writing. For example, a teacher might start to write a sentence on the board: 'The wicked wizard.... ' The class might then be told that the wizard is going into a witch's cave and is very angry with her. What powerful verb would be good to use in this situation to describe the wizard's movements? Examples might be: raged, stamped or rushed.
- Underlining 'boring' verbs in a child's writing and encouraging them to think about a better, more powerful verb to put in its place.

Verb tenses

Verb tenses tell us when an action took place in the present, past or future. Help your child understand the main verb tenses (simple present and present continuous, simple past and past continuous, simple future and future continuous) and understand which tenses are used in different kinds of texts.

Verbs are words which express actions. **The tense of a verb tells us the time when the action took place, in the past, the present or the future.**

Identifying verb tenses

There are **three main tenses: present, past and future.**

These sentences are written in the present tense:

- *I walk into the monster's cave.*
- *I am walking into the monster's cave.*

The present tense is made up of **simple present / present simple** (actions which happen regularly), **present continuous / present progressive** (actions which are taking place now) and **present perfect** (actions which are now completed).

These are examples of sentences written in the **past** tense:

- *I walked into the monster's cave.*
- *I was walking into the monster's cave.*

The past tense is made up of **simple past / past simple** (actions which took place at a specific time and are now finished), **past continuous / past progressive** (Actions which took place in the past over a period of time) and **past perfect** (actions which were completed by a particular point in the past).

These sentences are written in the **future** tense:

- *I will walk into the monster's cave.*
- *I will be walking into the monster's cave.*

The future tense is made up of simple **future / future simple** (actions which will take place in the future), **future continuous / future progressive** (actions which will take place in the future over a period of time) and **future perfect** (actions which will be completed by a particular point in the future).

Children will learn to distinguish between verb tenses in KS2. They will also look at the subjunctive in Year 6, and be introduced to irregular verbs.

Present	Past	Future
SIMPLE PRESENT I walk, you walk, he/she/it walks, we walk, you walk, they walk	**SIMPLE PAST** I walked, you walked, he/she/it walked, we walked, you walked, they walked	**SIMPLE FUTURE** I will walk, you will walk, he/she/it will walk, we will walk, you will walk, they will walk
PRESENT CONTINUOUS I am walking, you are walking, he/she/it is walking, we are walking, you are walking, they are walking	**PAST CONTINUOUS** I was walking, you were walking, he/she/it was walking, we were walking, you were walking, they were walking	**FUTURE CONTINUOUS** I will be walking, you will be walking, he/she/it will be walking, we will be walking, you will be walking, they will be walking
PRESENT PERFECT I have walked, you have walked, he/she/it has walked, we have walked, you have walked, they have walked	**PAST PERFECT** I had walked, you had walked, he/she/it had walked, we had walked, you had walked, they had walked	**FUTURE PERFECT** I will have walked, you will have walked, he/she/it will have walked, we will have walked, you will have walked, they will have walked

Using verb tenses correctly in KS1 and KS2

When a child is writing a story, they need to make sure that whether it is written in the past or present tense, **the tense is kept consistent throughout.**

Children learn a lot about verb tenses through listening, speaking and reading. One way a teacher might help a child with their tenses is to underline verbs that need to be changed so that a story they have written has a consistent tense throughout.

I woke up on a sunny morning and ran excitedly into the kitchen. My mum was making me pancakes, my favourite! She laid a pancake on my plate and I picked up the maple syrup and squeezed this all over the top. I roll up the pancake and stuff it in my mouth: it is delicious!

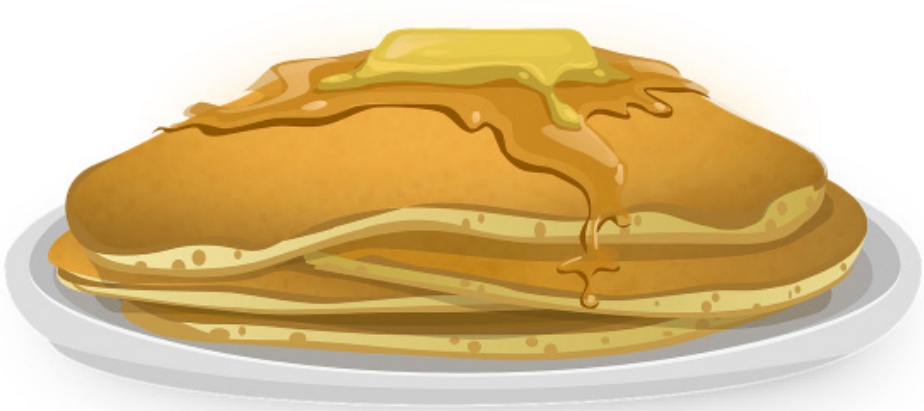
Here a child would be expected to read through the start of the story and think about which tense the story was written in. They would then need to change the underlined verbs to 'rolled', 'stuffed' and 'was' to keep the story consistently in the past tense.

Children will be reminded about tenses when they write fiction and non-fiction texts.

When they write a **fiction** text, they will need to remember to keep the tense consistent (that is, if they start writing in the past tense they need to stick to that throughout the story).

When writing **non-fiction** texts, they need to remember to keep to the tense shown in the texts they have studied.

- **Present tense** would usually be used for instructions, information texts, reports and explanations.
- **Past tense** would usually be used for recounts, biographies and autobiographies.
- Persuasive writing, journalistic writing and argument texts could be a mix of tenses (for example: an argument text might give an argument in the present tense, backed up by a fact in the past tense).



Vowels and consonants

We explain what vowels and consonants are and how primary-school children are taught to identify CVC, CCVC and CVCC words, vowel digraphs and consonant digraphs.

The alphabet is made up of 26 letters, 5 of which are vowels (a, e, i, o, u) and the rest of which are consonants.

A vowel is a sound that is made by allowing breath to flow out of the mouth, without closing any part of the mouth or throat.

A consonant is a sound that is made by blocking air from flowing out of the mouth with the teeth, tongue, lips or palate ('b' is made by putting your lips together, 'l' is made by touching your palate with your tongue).

The letter 'y' makes a consonant sound when at the beginning of a word ('yacht', 'yellow') but a vowel sound when at the end of a word ('sunny', 'baby').

Vowels and consonants in primary school

Children learn all the letters of the alphabet in the Foundation Stage (nursery and Reception years). This means they learn to look at a letter and then make its sound, but also to hear the sound of a letter and be able to write it down.

In Reception children move onto learning to read and write CVC words (consonant, vowel, consonant) such as cat, top, hit, nap.

They then move on to read and write CCVC words such as trip, stop, pram.

They also learn CVCC words such as milk, lamp, tusk.

Children will also learn that sometimes two vowels are put together to make one sound, such as ai, oo, ea, ie which can be found in words such as rain, boot, read and pie. When two vowels are put together to make one sound, it's a **vowel digraph.**

They also learn that sometimes two consonants are put together to make one sound, such as th, ch and sh which can be found in words such as bath, chip and mash. When two consonants are put together to make one sound, this is called a **consonant digraph.**

Teachers may or may not make children aware of all the linguistic vocabulary in bold above. It is not necessarily important that they know these words or can define them: the most important thing is that they learn to read and write individual letters and words with confidence through step-by-step phonics activities.

Children moving up the school may notice certain things about vowels and consonants. For example, in English we rarely have three or more vowels together; beautiful, queue, liaise, quail, quiet, squeal are some of the few words that use this spelling pattern.

Another thing children may notice is that every word in the English language contains a vowel. This is quite a useful thing to know when playing hangman: go for the vowels first!

vowel consonant vowel consonant
consonant vowel consonant vowel
vowel consonant vowel consonant
consonant vowel consonant vowel
vowel consonant vowel consonant
consonant vowel consonant vowel
vowel consonant vowel consonant
consonant vowel consonant vowel

Word banks

Word banks are useful tools to help improve children's writing in KS1 and KS2. Find out how to create one at home and make expanding vocabulary a whole-family project!

Word banks are quite simply lists of words to support children with their writing. These will vary according to the age of the child and the task given.

How are word banks used in KS1?

In Year 1, a teacher might ask a child to re-write Little Red Riding Hood. **To help them with their spellings**, they might give them a bank of words at the bottom of the page, such as: 'wolf', 'grandmother', 'forest' and 'basket'.

Word banks can also be used to **help children to be more creative.** A teacher might be focusing on adjectives in a particular lesson, so they may ask children to write a description of something using a given bank of adjectives.

How are word banks used in KS2?

As children move into Key Stage 2, they are expected to start using powerful verbs and adverbs. Word banks can be a good way of helping children to improve their writing by increasing their vocabulary; word banks offer some extra support.

Some teachers encourage children to make word banks on the wall, so that a list of adjectives, powerful verbs or adverbs become part of the display for children to see every day. They encourage children to add to these lists with words they have thought of or come across.

whisper	tiptoe	glance
bawl	hasten	gaze
joke	hop	peer
demand	clamber	spot
rage	dart	seek
groan	race	observe
jabber	scurry	witness
agree	sprint	gape
wail	gallop	glimpse
beg	shuffle	glare
respond	stroll	watch
shriek	strut	spy
thunder	trudge	snoop

Word family

Understand more about how children are introduced to word families, made up of words that share a root word modified by different prefixes and suffixes, in our guide for primary-school parents.

Word families are groups of words that have a common feature, pattern or meaning. They usually share a common base or root word, to which different prefixes and suffixes are added.

In KS2 children will learn about root words, prefixes and suffixes.

For example, the root word happy might have a prefix added (unhappy) or might have a suffix added (happiness).

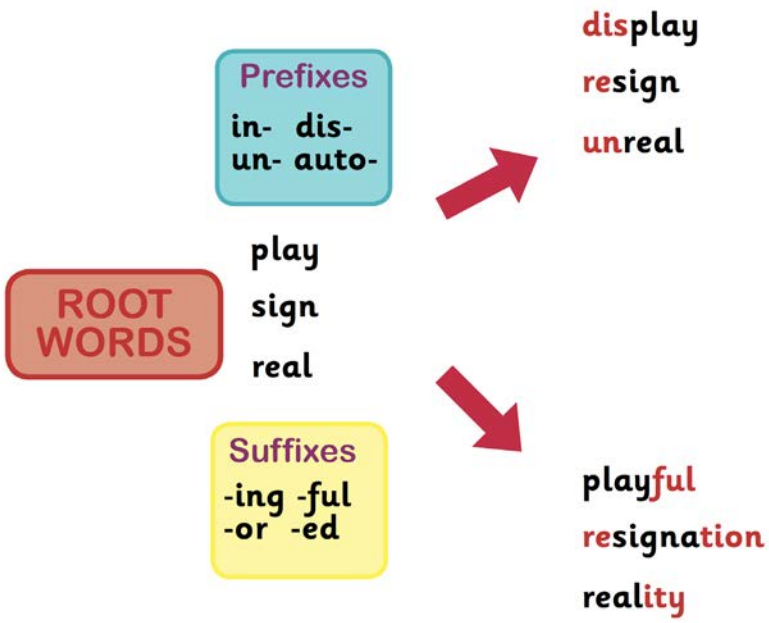
The words happy, unhappy, happiness could be considered to belong to the same word family.

When do children learn about word families?

It is important that children in KS2 understand the concept of root words, prefixes and suffixes, as this will come up in the Y6 Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test.

Understanding word families is also very useful when children are learning about correct spelling, as being able to identify the root word will help them spell other words in the same word family.

According to the national curriculum **children are introduced to word families in Year 3,** when they are shown that common words are related in form and meaning (for example, the words solve, solution, solvent, dissolve and insoluble all belong to the same word family).



In the Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling test children may be asked:

- to match various prefixes with their correct root words

- be given several words from the same family and asked to say what the root word means (sign, signature, design; the root word 'sign', from the Latin signum, means to make a mark for the purposes of authorisation)

- to add a suffix to a noun to turn it into an adjective (for example: adding the suffix -ful to 'beauty' changes the word to make 'beautiful')

You can help your child at home by encouraging them to learn the spelling lists they are given at school.

It would also be helpful to see if you can find words made up of prefixes / root words / suffixes and discuss with your child what the root word might mean. Can they think of any other prefixes or suffixes they could add to the word?

They may be tested on these in the KS2 SATs Grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of Year 6.

Writing frame

Your child will be taught to use a writing frame to help them set out stories they are writing. Find out how teachers explain how to use a writing frame and the features they contain.

A writing frame is a resource that teachers use in order to show children how to set out their writing and also to prompt them to include certain features.

Writing frame examples

For example, a teacher might make up a writing frame for letter-writing (see right).

This writing frame shows children how to set out their writing and also remind them to use certain features, such as Dear... at the beginning. The letter-writing frame has two boxes to encourage children to split their writing into two paragraphs when writing their letter.

Below is a writing frame that may be used to support children in writing an instruction text:

Writing frames may be given to the whole class in Key Stage 1 and Year 3, but for the rest of Key Stage 2, it is most likely only the children who struggle with writing will be given these supports.