Teaching and learning in the Key Stage 3 Strategy

A self-study guide for trainees: English
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in the Key Stage 3 Strategy

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Contents

Introduction to using the materials ........................................ 5

Core units

1 An introduction to the Key Stage 3 National Strategy .......... 7
2 The context for teaching English at Key Stage 3 ................. 13

Optional units

3 Planning and teaching to objectives ................................ 19
4 Lesson starters and introductory activities ......................... 24
5 Teacher introductions: modelling and shared work ............. 29
6 Speaking and listening .................................................... 36
7 Organising group work .................................................... 40
8 Guided and independent work ......................................... 46
9 Plenaries .......................................................................... 52
10 Marking ............................................................................ 56

Appendices ........................................................................... 60
Introduction to using the materials

Who is the training material designed to support?

This booklet and video are designed for those who require more support and guidance for the teaching and learning approaches suggested in the Key Stage 3 Strategy. You may be a:

• GTP trainee;
• SCITT trainee;
• PGCE trainee;
• BA QTS trainee;
• returning teacher;
• overseas teacher;
• supply teacher.

What you will need

You will need:

• this training booklet;
• the accompanying video;
• your personal copy of the Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfEE 0019/2001);
• a TV monitor and video;
• a notebook and pencil;
• between 30 and 45 minutes of uninterrupted time for each unit.

It would also be helpful (but not essential) to have access to a computer with an Internet connection so that you can follow trails through English training materials available on the Standards Key Stage 3 website: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

The units are marked throughout with the following symbols:

- Read
- Watch
- Note
- Try
- Think
- Discuss
Introduction to using the materials

Find out
Ways of using the materials

You can study each unit in your own time or work together with another beginner teacher at your own, or a neighbouring, school. This would allow you an opportunity to discuss what you have found out and compare classroom practice. If possible, it would be even more advantageous to work as part of a small group of two or three others together with a subject ‘mentor’.

- Each unit has a small preparatory activity and a follow-up task to go away and try in class because this will help you to apply your new knowledge.
- There is a personal evaluation/audit to do after each session so you will need to make a note at the end of every unit. An accumulative record could be photocopied and kept by the department head/mentor/trainee as an indicator of your study and professional development.
- Each session ends with some FAQs (frequently asked questions) and possible answers and a ‘Ready for more?’ section containing further reading of Key Stage 3 Strategy materials and some research references should you wish to pursue the subject further.

Core and optional units explained

You may already know something about the teaching and learning approaches advocated in the Key Stage 3 Strategy and in this booklet from your previous experience or because you have attended some LEA or school-based training. The contents are organised as core units, a suggested common starting point, followed by several stand-alone optional units from which you can ‘pick and mix’. Which units you follow will depend on:

- your previous training, knowledge and understanding of the Key Stage 3 Strategy;
- your continuing professional development need;
- discussion and guidance from your line manager, mentor or department head.

For further guidance about specific subject knowledge such as spelling or grammar, you will need to refer to English training materials in Appendix 2. You should be able to obtain all these from the English department at your school. Many of them are also available for reading and downloading on the Standards website: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3
Core unit 1
An introduction to the Key Stage 3 National Strategy

Preparatory task

In your notebook, either jot down or map what you already know about the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. On a new page list some queries or questions for things you want to find out and learn more about.

Aims

• To set the English strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy into a context of whole-school improvement and raised standards.
• To establish the English strand firmly within a teaching and learning agenda.

What is it?

The Key Stage 3 Strategy is part of the government’s commitment to raise standards in schools by:
• strengthening teaching and learning in all subjects;
• developing cross-curricular skills such as literacy and numeracy;
• specific intervention to help pupils working below expected National Curriculum levels to make faster progress.

It is based on four key principles.
• Expectations: establishing high expectations for all pupils and setting challenging targets for them to achieve.
• Progression: strengthening the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and ensuring progression in teaching and learning across Key Stage 3.
• Engagement: promoting approaches to teaching and learning that engage and motivate pupils and demand their active participation.
• Transformation: strengthening teaching and learning through a programme of professional development and practical support.

Principles of teaching and learning

The principles that guide the work of the Strategy are:
• including all pupils in a culture of high expectations (no child left behind);
• establishing the centrality of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum (reinforcing the basics);
• infusing learning skills across the curriculum (enriching the learning experience);
• promoting assessment for learning (making every child special);
• expanding the teacher’s range of teaching strategies and techniques (making learning worthwhile and enjoyable and more likely to meet all pupils’ learning needs).

The Key Stage 3 Strategy consists of five strands:
• English and the development of cross-curriculum literacy;
• mathematics and the development of numeracy skills in other subjects;
• science;
• information and communication technology (ICT);
• foundation subjects.

The English and mathematics strands were introduced in 2001; science, ICT and the foundation subjects followed in 2002. The strands work together to ensure that messages about teaching and learning are consistent and relate to raised standards and school improvement as a whole. Cross-strand groups work jointly on common areas, for example assessment for learning, gender issues and promoting the learning of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Two additional strands have been added for 2003/2004:
• behaviour and attendance;
• schools facing challenging circumstances.

How does it affect secondary schools in England?

Every maintained secondary school now has an identified Key Stage 3 Strategy manager and funding to develop teaching and learning at Key Stage 3. Although the Key Stage 3 Strategy has a ‘recommended’ rather than a ‘statutory’ status, a recent poll showed that a large majority of secondary headteachers have confidence that it will enhance teaching and learning and improve standards at Key Stage 3.

Each LEA also has a Key Stage 3 Strategy manager and a team of LEA Key Stage 3 consultants for the strands, whose job it is to support schools with raising standards through training and development using Strategy materials. Some schools are identified for additional support and consultants work ‘in contract’ with them. Schools are asked to release teachers for a minimum number of days of core central training and to disseminate this back within their departments.

Make a note of the following:
• the name of the Key Stage 3 Strategy manager in your current school;
• the name(s) of the LEA English consultant(s) for your school.

Strategy managers and subject leaders (heads of department) will be using data to identify pupils needing additional intervention support and to set numerical and curriculum targets.
Most schools will be using the generic form Auditing a subject in Key Stage 3 within departments to check on progress and to decide on priorities for a departmental action plan to develop teaching and learning and improve standards for that subject. A copy of this is available for downloading on the Key Stage 3 Strategy website: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3

If possible look at the website (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3) and track down the audit document under ‘Publications A–Z – audit’. Alternatively, ask to see your department’s most recently completed audit and action plan.

**What characterises teaching and learning in the Key Stage 3 Strategy?**

Teaching and learning are at the heart of the Strategy, its core business and the concern of everyone in the school. The Strategy aims to raise standards achieved by 11–14-year-olds by transforming approaches to teaching and learning in all subjects through:

- high expectations for all pupils – an inclusive classroom;
- focused objectives-led teaching – using the Frameworks for English, mathematics, science, ICT and MFL;
- planned structured lessons;
- interactive and engaging teaching and learning at an appropriate pace – the active engagement of all pupils;
- ensuring progression and continuity – building on prior knowledge and learning and challenging pupils further;
- opportunities for purposeful talk to underpin thinking and learning in class;
- supporting pupils to move towards independence and responsibility for their own learning;
- a teaching sequence which moves from explicit teacher modelling and demonstration through shared whole-class and supported group work to independent application of what has been learnt;
- effective questioning and time for pupils to reflect on and evaluate their own learning and progress.

Now read the section on ‘Approaches to teaching and learning’ on pages 16 to 18 in your Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9.
What does a Key Stage 3 Strategy lesson look like?

A typical lesson
Adapted from Managing the second year (DfES 0143/2002)

Pupils come into the classroom and there is something to do right away. There is a question on the board, a challenge on the desk, a comment in their books, something to think about. Right away the teacher has the attention of the class. The lesson is off to a flying start.

The first 10 minutes are spent on a brisk mini-activity to catch the imagination. This is the starter activity. In English, pupils might think of ten powerful alternatives to the words said, asked or exclaimed to use when they write a dialogue. Very often, this starter will be pertinent and picked up later in the main part of the lesson. Even 10 minutes into the lesson, the pupils already feel as though they’ve learnt something.

The main part of the lesson is introduced by the teacher identifying with pupils what they are going to learn, rather than what they are going to do. They won’t just ‘plan and write a short horror story’, they will ‘consider the techniques writers use to build suspense’. Lessons have focus. The objectives are drawn from the Key Stage 3 Framework and shared with the class. If you asked some pupils coming out of a lesson what they had learnt, they could tell you.

Another feature is the active teaching. For example, the teacher will start to demonstrate on the board how to compose a particular type of writing, modelling the thinking, decisions and choices out loud and the pupils will be drawn in to contribute. Teachers are more likely to ask pupils for individual contributions by name, planning their questioning accordingly. Homework from the previous lesson may play a part. Pupils are looking up, being engaged and thinking. The teacher is not afraid to be an expert.

From the pupils’ point of view, lessons are active and engaging. They are expected to participate. They are frequently asked to stop, think, suggest and explain themselves. They might have a moment to talk to a partner and come up with a suggestion. They might have to work on a problem and hold up answers on individual whiteboards.

A key feature is asking pupils to explain their thinking or decisions: ‘Good choice. Tell the class why you decided that’. Pupils sometimes come to the front of the class to explain. There is an emphasis on explaining good ways of working, showing how effective learners operate, suggesting how the same method can be used in other subjects.

The teacher moves quickly to get the pupils to apply what they’ve learnt, often working in groups or pairs for support. This part of the lesson may last around 15 to 20 minutes. In the past teachers may have waited for pupils who ‘get stuck’ to put their hands up. Now, they are more likely to sit with one group for several minutes and guide them through the work, helping them to apply new skills.
Any teaching assistant in the classroom is well prepared, has helped the teacher to plan the lesson and is familiar with their special role. They may have attended training about it. The assistant may be sitting with a group of pupils to help them keep up with the work, or making notes for the teacher on how pupils are setting about a task.

A plenary session either closes a lesson or occurs after certain lesson episodes and is when the teacher draws out the key learning points. Pupils do most of the work; they are encouraged to explain what they’ve learnt and how it can be used in the future, perhaps in other lessons. Regular homework helps individuals to consolidate what they have learnt in the lesson or to prepare for the next one. The teacher often looks ahead with pupils to what they will be doing next lesson.

Note: Not all lessons will look exactly like this but many of the principles will apply to lessons in all subjects. Use this description as an aide memoire to help you with the lesson observation.

Good teaching, good learning

Good teaching fosters good learning, which stems from effective lesson design. Good teaching results when teachers:

- focus and structure their teaching;
- actively engage pupils in their own learning;
- develop pupil’s learning skills for independence;
- use assessment for learning (see Unit 10);
- have high expectations of pupils;
- use well-paced teaching matched to a range of learning styles;
- create a settled and purposeful atmosphere.

Arrange to observe a lesson in English at Key Stage 3. Use the form in appendix 1 to note what happens in each episode of the lesson and how close each is to the principles of a ‘typical’ Key Stage 3 Strategy lesson.

You could also ask a colleague, mentor or ‘critical friend’ to observe you teaching a lesson to a Key Stage 3 class next week and use the observation aide memoire. Use your notes as a basis for discussion after the lesson with the teacher and/or your mentor.
FAQ

I am confused as to whether lessons should follow a three-part, or a four-part lesson format. Which is it for English?

The Key Stage 3 Strategy simply recommends that lessons should be ‘structured’ so that teachers and pupils are clear about what is to be learnt, how this will be achieved and how this fits with what pupils already know. Effective teachers use a wide range of different teaching and learning approaches to suit a lesson’s objectives. All lessons need a strong start and an effective finish and the teaching has to be designed for the development of learning for pupils.

Ready for more?

- Borrow or download and read Key Messages: Pedagogy and practice (a part of Introducing the third year) (DfES 0110/2003).
- Arrange to visit one or more leading English teachers or leading English departments to observe particular features of teaching at Key Stage 3. There will be local LEA arrangements for this. Ask your head of department about these.
Preparatory task

Read the description of what ‘literate’ pupils should know, understand and be able to do by the end of Year 9 in your copy of the Framework on page 10.

Aims

• To establish an overview of the English strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.
• To consider the relationship between the National Curriculum for English and the Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9.
• To gain familiarity with the Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9.

Why now?

• National standards in Key Stage 3 English have been fairly static for three years (but have now started to move with a 2% rise in results in the 2002 tests).
• Pupils transferring to secondary school (Year 7 in 2003–2004) now will have experienced at least four years of National Literacy Strategy teaching in their primary schools.
• Secondary schools need to capitalise and build on the national progress in English made by pupils in Key Stage 2 and what they have learnt.
• Until recently, insufficient progress was made across the three years of Key Stage 3.
• Productiveness and pace of working are weaker at Key Stage 3.

Setting the context for a National Strategy at Key Stage 3

• The success of the National Literacy Strategy in primary schools and the substantial improvements in standards show the benefits of having a national strategy. Schools have been supported in their aim of meeting agreed targets by funding, high quality training materials and consultancy support.
• Reading standards are still higher than those for writing. Many pupils entering Year 7 with an overall level 4 are still writing at level 3. Writing levels tend to continue to lag behind those for reading in Key Stage 3.
Girls are achieving better results than boys and the gap has been widening.

Because of the learning dip which occurs at transfer and during Key Stage 3 (well documented by Galton, Gray and Ruddock, 1999), there is a need to ensure progression and to strengthen transition by providing continuity of teaching and learning approaches and by building on and consolidating what has been previously taught.

The 17 pilot LEAs showed that continuing with the emphasis on the familiar teaching and learning strategies of the Key Stage 3 Framework supported pupils’ progress.

The English strand of the National Strategy at Key Stage 3 is underpinned by considerable research evidence as to what constitutes effective practice in reading, writing, speaking and listening (see Roots and Research by Professor Colin Harrison, DfES, 2002).

Overview of the English strand

Outlined below is the support available to schools to support them in reaching their targets in English for Key Stage 3 pupils.

- **Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9** (DfEE 0019/2001).
- **Training** for English departments – focused on teaching and learning strategies – see appendix 2 for a full list of units in the file and other publications.
- **Literacy across the curriculum** (DfEE 0235/2001) – a whole-school initiative – see appendix 2 for full list of units in the file and other publications.
- **Intervention strategies**: Literacy progress units, Boosters, Reading challenge and Writing challenge and others – see appendix 2.
- **LEA consultancy** - more intensive support for some schools.
- **Audit** of current provision to inform department action plan and curricular targets.
- **Local school networks** for sharing and support.

What are the priorities in your department’s action plan for Key Stage 3 classes?

Find out if this is based on the Audit document and if so, ask to see it.

What are the curricular targets for the Key Stage 3 groups that you teach?

National priorities for development

The annual QCA reports based on the end of key stage national tests identify implications for development priorities in reading and writing. Those for Key Stage 3 are as follows.

**Reading**

- Focus on explaining rather than recounting.
- More selective use of quotation.
- Develop and sustain comments on writers’ techniques.
• More precise comments on writers’ use of language, including choice of words and phrases, imagery, sentence length and construction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word level</th>
<th>Sentence level</th>
<th>Text level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Spelling</td>
<td>• Sentence construction and punctuation</td>
<td>• Research and study skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spelling strategies</td>
<td>• Paragraphing and cohesion</td>
<td>• Reading for meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vocabulary</td>
<td>• Stylistic conventions</td>
<td>• Understanding the author’s craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Standard English and language variation</td>
<td>• Study of literary texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing

• Develop pupils’ understanding and use of commas to demarcate clauses and phrases.
• Focus particularly on the endings of non-narrative texts.
• Secure pupils’ knowledge of the layout and full punctuation of speech.
• Develop a range of spelling strategies, beyond the phonological, which pupils can apply to increasingly complex words as their vocabulary expands.
• Use the possessive apostrophe correctly.

English teachers will recognise many of these issues and the challenge of providing the most appropriate teaching to improve standards. Improving standards of writing is a major focus of the English strand for 2003–2004.

Introducing the Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9

English departments are conscientious about covering the statutory National Curriculum that specifies the content for English teaching and the range of texts to be taught.

The Framework is entirely complementary to the National Curriculum. All English teachers and trainees should have their own personal copy. It provides the **how** to fit with the National Curriculum’s **what** to teach.
• It reflects the National Curriculum but focuses more sharply on the way English is taught to ensure progression across Years 7, 8 and 9.
• It does this through teaching objectives organised into sections covering word, sentence and text level for each year.
• The text level objectives are further organised into reading, writing and speaking and listening objectives.
• It has key objectives (identified in bold print) that signify skills and understanding crucial to pupils’ development in English.
• It secures attention to the explicit teaching of spelling, vocabulary, sentence grammar and style that underpin understanding of text level reading and writing.

Now read ‘Covering the National Curriculum’ on pages 14 to 15 in your copy of the Framework.
How Framework objectives are organised

Now read the section on ‘The structure of the Framework’ on pages 11 to 13 in your own copy of the Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9.

Look at the ‘name tags’ for the objectives on pages 43 to 45 of your Framework. Look up the full version of the objective for the following tags:

- Yr 7 S15 ‘vary formality’
- Yr 8 R8 ‘transposition’
- Yr 9 Wr7 ‘infotainment’

On the opposite page is a worked example of how the Framework of objectives might relate to the National Curriculum for the ‘Composition of narrative writing’ in Year 7.

Now complete the grid for Years 8 and 9 for the ‘Planning and drafting’ row and then select appropriate objectives for ‘Language structure’ across the three years.
The relationship between the National Curriculum and the Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9

‘National Curriculum writing: during Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils develop confidence in writing for a range of purposes. They develop their own distinctive styles and recognise the importance of writing with commitment and vitality. They learn to write correctly, using different formats, layouts and ways of presenting their work’. (National Curriculum English, 1999, DfEE and QCA)

**Writing to imagine, explore, entertain (narrative structures)**

Pupils should be taught to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Curriculum Framework objectives Year 8</th>
<th>Framework objectives Year 7</th>
<th>Framework objectives Year 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
FAQ

I have both the National Curriculum for English and the Framework for teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9. Which should I use to plan Key Stage 3 lessons?

Using the Framework will ensure that your lessons are planned to objectives which will ensure progression for your pupils over the three years of the key stage. You will also have appropriately balanced teaching of reading, writing, speaking and listening. You will be covering the National Curriculum but you should check your choice of texts against the recommended range.

Ready for more?

- QCA – see the latest Standards report on pupils’ performance on the end of key stage English tests at www.qca.org.uk
Optional unit 3

Planning and teaching to objectives

Preparatory task

Ask your head of department or English mentor for the long-term plans for the whole of Key Stage 3 outlining the units of work to be taught to Years 7, 8 and 9. Also look at page 36 in your Framework, which gives an example of one school’s planning for the spring and summer terms for Year 7.

Aims

• To consider the relationship between long-, medium- and short-term planning.
• To read and use a short-term plan.
• To try a piece of short-term planning with a colleague.

Planning: the inter-relationship of long-, medium- and short-term plans

Long-term plans:

• cover the whole key stage;
• provide an overview of the unit or units for each year at Key Stage 3;
• ensure that the National Curriculum range is covered;
• indicate where all the objectives of the Framework are addressed.

Medium-term plans:

• cover a unit of work from the long-term plan. These can be of varying length appropriate to the material to be taught;
• can be organised by topic, text or strand of work;
• identify which objectives are grouped together for teaching and the order in which to tackle them;
• identify the timing of the unit and how many lessons to spend on it;
• indicate the assessment piece or learning outcome that the pupils will achieve during its course.
Short-term plans:

- identify one or two objectives for explicit teaching in individual lessons from the medium-term plan;
- make clear how the objectives will be taught;
- identify texts and other resources to be used;
- may include homework;
- provide a structure for the lessons;
- adopt a lesson structure that could be flexed to suit the teaching of the objectives.

Video extract 1: Planning (13 minutes)

Watch the English team discussing the medium- and short-term planning for Key Stage 3 lessons and evaluating a unit on prose fiction.

What evidence is there of the teachers’ understanding that they are building on pupils’ primary experience and prior knowledge?

What is the evidence that extra intervention through a Literacy progress unit (Writing organisation – DfEE 0473/2001) has helped a low-attaining pupil to improve her writing?

Designing and structuring learning

Research shows that structuring learning by dividing lessons into clear phases or episodes helps to maintain an appropriate pace and challenge for pupils. This may involve planning to:

- get the lesson off to a flying start by involving the whole class in a lively, engaging and thought-provoking starter activity (see Unit 4);
- evoke and build upon pupils’ prior knowledge;
- draw from a range of approaches that help to make the learning active and engaging for all pupils and which suit the lesson's objectives;
- set tasks that cater for and encompass different learning styles;
- scaffold and/or ‘chunk’ the learning so that all pupils can carry out extended or challenging tasks over more than one lesson;
- provide activities that allow pupils to process new information and to identify, investigate and apply patterns, conventions or features;
- use plenaries to crystallise and embed pupils’ learning by providing opportunities for them to reflect on the learning and the strategies they used to help them;
- help pupils transfer learning in order to ‘join the dots’, i.e. encourage wider application by recognising the connections between the thinking involved in one lesson and other contexts.
Reading and using a short-term plan

Look at the short-term plan on page 40 of your Framework. Imagine you are covering for a colleague who is ill.

What resources will you need in class for Monday's lesson?

What questions or activities will you need to devise to ensure a successful final plenary on Tuesday?

How will you organise the classroom and group pupils for Friday's lesson?

Creating a climate for learning

To design an effective climate for learning, teachers need to consider two factors:

• the pupil's learning style – pupils need regular opportunities to learn in their preferred manner, there are some key features of different learning styles:
  - Kinaesthetic learner: learns best when physically and emotionally engaged in the process of doing or feeling, prefers to learn experientially, often through trial and error.
  - Auditory learner: learns best through class and group discussion and when working with others. Has a planned logical approach to learning and is helped by incremental steps. Sometimes talks aloud to self whilst learning.
  - Visual learner 1: needs to see things to understand them. Prefers diagrams, pictures, charts to convey information. Likes mind maps or flow charts and is helped when new information is connected to previous lessons and future learning.
  - Visual learner 2: learns best when reading or following notes. Is logical, linear and observant of detail.

• the pupil's prior learning and attainment – pupils need to work in advance of what they already know and can do, but not to such an extent that they become unduly stressed.

What is your own preferred learning style? Do you think teachers tend to teach to their own preferred style at the expense of others?

Plan a short unit of work (4–6 lessons) to address an aspect of the English curriculum (e.g., travel writing) that fills a current gap in provision, e.g., travel writing for Year 8. Take into consideration the long-term and medium-term planning for the year and the curriculum targets for pupils.

Try to work collaboratively with another English teacher.

Ensure that your lessons create a 'climate for learning' through the inclusion of a range of activities that will appeal to different learning styles during the series of lessons and are building on what pupils already know and can do.
You might find it helpful to find an example of an existing short unit of work from your department so that you can follow the agreed pattern and conventions.
FAQs

My department has already planned the whole key stage so I am given ready-made plans to teach. How far can I vary these in my own classroom?

All teachers personalise their teaching, adding favourite methods and resources, but you will need to ensure that your pupils have the same entitlement as other classes with regard to the objectives you will teach. A common approach at least allows you the opportunity to discuss/peer-observe someone else working to the same plans.

I am not given any opportunity to plan as this has already been done. I feel I need to do some planning in order to properly understand and own the process.

Talk to your mentor or head of department and say that you would like to develop some expertise in planning using the Framework. Ask if you and a colleague could plan and trial a very short unit of work (see the ‘Try’ section above!). You could then share it with the department.

Ready for more?

- Read Module 3 of English department training – Planning (DfEE 0234/2001).

Fill in your personal record at the end of this unit and after completing the post-unit ‘Try’ tasks. It will build toward a record of continuing professional development and could be shared with your mentor.
Unit 3: Planning  Personal record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I am going to try</th>
<th>What else I need to find out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did it go?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What went well and why</th>
<th>What didn't work well and why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Next time I will try ...
Optional unit 4
Lesson starters and introductory activities

Preparatory task

Make a note of some of the more successful ways you have started an English lesson with pupils in Key Stage 3.

Aims

• To promote whole-class introductory sessions with pacy interactive teaching and learning activities.

What are ‘starter’ activities?

At the heart of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is the belief that effective learning involves the active participation of pupils. The lesson starter provides one opportunity to develop whole-class interactivity, grabbing pupils’ attention right from the start of the lesson and getting their heads into gear for the subject content to follow.

Interactive whole-class teaching like this differs from more traditional methods of didactic teaching because it is:
• inclusive – everyone is expected to contribute and learn;
• rooted in purposeful speaking and listening – talking to explain, understand and learn;
• collaborative – working, sharing and progressing together;
• motivating – maximises opportunities to participate;
• thought-provoking – emphasises enquiry, problem solving and developing ideas;
• varied – appeals to and utilises a range of different learning styles.

It is much more than a simple question and answer session. It is about passing some of the responsibility to pupils. It is an expectation that the activity involves everyone, not just a handful of bright, talkative or willing pupils. The oral interaction is vital as it provides opportunities to develop thinking out loud – a rehearsal for written expression. Because it is a communal, shared and public activity, pupils are able to see and hear models of good thinking such as reasoning and speculation. By experiencing and practising in this way, pupils will eventually be able to internalise these learning processes for themselves.
Lesson starters can be activities at text, sentence or word level. They can be planned to make integral links to later activities planned for the lesson or be a discrete set of activities focused on some of the objectives as a separate strand in the scheme of work.

Think of some starter activities you have seen or been given by colleagues.

- Were they planned to be stand-alone, for example a series of starter activities focusing on some spelling objectives?
- Were they involving something that was intended to relate to work later in the lesson?
- Which objective was the starter activity aiming to teach or consolidate?
- Were they investigative stimulus activities designed to get pupils thinking about a new topic or their prior knowledge?
- Were they based on the teacher’s observation of aspects that required further practice or consolidation?
- Did they engage pupils?
- Were they interactive?
- How long did they last?

Why do them?

- Popular fun activities – pupils enjoy them – gets lesson off to a flying start.
- Quickly gets ‘heads into gear’ ready for English (after previous PE, music, lunch break, design and technology, and so on).
- Involves everyone and focuses attention.
- Gives pupils a sense of early gains in the lesson, a sense that something has been accomplished and achieved right away.
- Breaks up a long lesson into more manageable chunks – supports pupils with poor concentration or perseverance.
- Can be designed to appeal to a range of preferred learning styles.
- Ideal for explicit teaching of spelling, vocabulary and some sentence level objectives.
- Creates a space for ‘little and often’ teaching and for consolidation in response to observed weaknesses (e.g. from marking).

Video extract 2: Starter activities (16 minutes)

Now watch the three examples filmed in different schools of word level, sentence level and text level starters.

How many of the six features of effective starter activities (inclusive, rooted in purposeful speaking and listening, collaborative, motivating, thought-provoking, varied) did you observe?
When to use them

Starters should be planned to objectives and for the learning needs of your pupils but can be used flexibly for a range of purposes. For example, you can use them to:

- create a stimulus for some new work, for example provide some props to begin to think about the difference between ‘tourist’ and ‘traveller’ for a unit on travel writing for Year 8;
- activate prior knowledge (e.g. through concept mapping), ‘think the link’ prediction activities (e.g. in pairs pupils write the title of the unread short story in the middle of a whiteboard and map predictions as to what they think it might be about – the teacher could read the opening sentences);
- teach or consolidate clause structure in some complex sentences taken from the writing of an author you will be using later in the lesson;
- revise use of possessive apostrophes or conventions for setting out speech through an investigative activity;
- improve sentences in marked work by teaching some sentence level objectives and asking pupils to rewrite a couple of the sentences you have underlined in their books using features you have modelled.

How to do them

- Plan starter activities that last about 10 minutes.
- Make them fast, oral, highly interactive and fun.

Use some of the ideas above to try both of the following introductory activities with different year groups.

- Plan and teach a one-off starter activity that is integrated into the content of the main part of the lesson by introducing something you want pupils to use later. Make it pacy, engaging and challenging.
- Plan and teach a sequence of starters across three lessons in a week in which you work through three progressive stages – a) teach a feature at word or sentence level, b) set some investigations for pupils to explore the convention, and c) consolidate using ‘show me’ whiteboard checks for understanding of the feature you have been teaching. Tell the pupils you will be marking for correct use of this feature this week.
FAQs

Do I have to have a starter activity for every lesson?

No, a lesson structure needs to be flexible. You may want to create more time for another activity in your lesson, for example to allow time for extended writing.

My starter activities are taking up half the lesson ... what can I do?

Lesson starters should last no longer than 10–15 minutes maximum. Perhaps you are trying to do too much. Try breaking the starter into three parts across the three lessons in the week as suggested above. Perhaps pace is an issue? Remember the point is for starters to be fun, active and quick.

The starters I have seen have all been disassociated paper and pencil worksheet quiz type of things. How can I make my starters more active?

Remember that starters are ideally interactive and engaging. They don’t have to involve written answers. Invest in some whiteboards that allow for a variety of activities – in starter activities and in other episodes of the lesson.

Is it ok that in my school pupils always start each English lesson with 10 minutes of personal silent reading?

Personal independent reading is important and should be encouraged but the value of the allocated 10 minutes is questionable for many pupils. How many of them are actively engaged in reading as opposed to flicking through pages? How do you know what ‘reading’ is going on? What teaching is involved at this point of the lesson? How would you feel if you had just engaged with a text and your time was up after a few minutes?

Ready for more?

- Look at the Framework example on pages 35 to 41.
- Read English department training: Unit 2 (DfEE 0234/2001)
- Watch the English department training: Year 8 video for an example of a speaking and listening starter activity.
Unit 4: Starter activities  Personal record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I am going to try</th>
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<tr>
<td>How did it go?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What went well and why</th>
<th>What didn't work well and why</th>
</tr>
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</table>

- Establish clear aims
- Provide good examples of text-type
- Explore features of the text
- Define the conventions
- Demonstrate how it is written
- Compose together
- Scaffold first attempts
- Independent writing
- Draw out the key learning
- Review

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Preparatory task

Make a list of the things that good readers do when they read. One of the difficulties for teachers, as skilled readers, is being sufficiently aware of the strategies they use themselves so that they can make them explicit to pupils.

Aim

• To propose a teaching sequence which builds an explicit bridge between reading and writing.

The searchlight model for reading

The National Literacy Strategy at Key Stages 1 and 2 summarises the way that readers use and combine the different strategies through the analogy of ‘searchlights’ that can be switched on and off but, when combined, can powerfully ‘illuminate and search’ the text for meaning. Good readers orchestrate these strategies automatically. The four searchlights involve:

• phonic knowledge – using sound/letter knowledge to decode unknown words;
• grammatical knowledge – applying knowledge of sentence structures and word order (syntax) of the English language to predict or confirm information
from other strategies;

- **knowledge of context** – the reader makes use of the whole context of the reading and brings experience to bear on the sorts of words/sentences likely to occur;

- **word recognition and graphic knowledge** – important because some common words can be recognised by sight or distinguished by shape, usually because they are not phonically regular.

Reading involves more than just decoding at word, sentence and text level. Meaning in literary texts is complex and multi-layered; readers need to bring their own experience to be able to read between and beyond the lines. At Key Stage 3 the aim is to encourage and motivate readers to understand, question and appreciate texts and to develop pupils’ powers of imagination and critical analysis.

**Shared reading: what is it?**

Shared reading provides an opportunity for teachers to work with the whole class on challenging texts (enlarged via OHP or data projector so that all pupils can see). The teacher and invited pupils are able to annotate linguistic and structural features of the text, making them explicit to all. It is more powerful than individual copies and ‘eyes down’ because the attention of all pupils can be focused by the teacher on the features or parts of the text relevant to the discussion – ‘it makes the invisible process of reading, visible’.

**Advantages of shared reading**

- Pupils can work with a text beyond their independent reading level because the teacher is in control and makes explicit some of the ‘in the head’ processes used by experienced readers.
- Reading strategies are explicitly modelled for pupils.
- Texts are used as a focus for teaching Framework objectives with appropriate links at text, sentence and word level.
- Links between reading and writing (authorial choices) can be made explicit.
- Appropriate technical terms (metalanguage) can be taught in context.
- Pupils are encouraged to interact with the teacher and one another.
- Pupils are encouraged to extend and reflect on their responses.

**Modelling reading: what is it?**

Modelling reading is a powerful strategy that can be used to teach a range of skills and processes for improving reading. It involves the teacher as an ‘expert’ demonstrating how to do something and making the process explicit by doing the thinking aloud. It makes explicit to pupils the range of different strategies that can be used with fiction and non-fiction texts.
Why do it?

- Modelling helps make explicit the hidden ‘in the head’ thinking processes behind the skills and decisions taken by readers and writers in making meaning and engaging with the text.
- Modelling plays a significant role in helping pupils to learn independently.
- Modelling is most effective when the teacher:
  - is specific;
  - explains underlying principles;
  - shares thinking.

Video extract 3: Modelled reading (11 minutes)

Now watch Dean Mansfield with a Year 9 class as he makes the features of a particular non-fiction text explicit to pupils in teaching critical reading.

How does the teacher make the ‘in the head’ strategies of a sophisticated reader explicit to pupils?

Annotate a piece of text you will be using with the class, as a reader, related to some reading objectives you wish to teach. Use this with a class, exploring and discussing the author’s language choices in relation to audience, purpose and content. Use appropriate technical language.

Shared writing: what is it?

English teachers are usually very good at setting motivating tasks for writing but not always so effective at teaching pupils the skills they need to build up the writing successfully.

There are three aspects of shared writing.

1. **Teacher demonstration**
   - Where the teacher at the OHP or whiteboard demonstrates how the text is composed. This is an active process, not just the provision of an example. The teacher thinks the process through aloud, rehearsing the sentence before writing, making changes to its construction or choice of words, and explaining why one form of words is preferable to another. She or he writes the sentence, rereads it and changes it again if necessary. The teacher normally demonstrates two or three sentences. The importance of teacher demonstration is that it shows pupils how and why writers make certain choices when composing.

2. **Teacher scribing**
   - Normally follows demonstration. Pupils now make contributions building on what the teacher has demonstrated. The teacher responds to the pupils' suggestions in order to refine their understanding and thinking.

3. **Reflection and focus on speaking and listening objectives addressed**
   - This is a time for pupils to reflect on the process and content of the demonstration. Often this is done in small groups or pairs, sometimes guided by an adult teacher. The focus is on talking about the processes involved and how they might be applied in their own writing.
accuracy. In order to improve the quantity and quality of pupils’ contributions, pupils may be given the chance to discuss their contribution with a partner first and/or to make rough notes. The teacher may ask for a number of suggestions and there can be discussion about which is the most appropriate.

- **Supported composition**, where pupils are then asked to write a limited amount of text individually or in pairs. This might be done on mini-whiteboards or in notebooks. This is best done swiftly with the sentences held up for the teacher to view once completed. This allows for instant assessment. The teacher can choose to focus on a positive example or on an error in order to make a teaching point.

The Key Stage 3 Strategy suggests a clear and explicit teaching sequence for shared writing with the whole class.

**A sequence for teaching writing**
This sequence provides pupils with a bridge from reading into writing through a process of identifying features and conventions of a specific text-type; seeing the teacher use these to start to construct a piece of writing and contributing to it, before applying principles to their own writing. Review and reflection is built in throughout the process. You might get an idea of the sequence in action from the following teacher commentary.

Here is an example of a text-type.

Let’s investigate how it works – what are its special features?
Let’s list these features to remind ourselves.
Now watch me start to write a similar piece.
Join me/help me out with some ideas for the next sentence.
What might come next? Have a go at this next bit together (pairs or groups).
Now try on your own.

Why do it?

Many teachers will be familiar with this practice, but sometimes stages of the sequence are missed and pupils find it hard to make the leaps that teachers expect without an explicit staged approach.

The timing and weighting given to stages in the sequence will depend on the difficulty of the writing objective. Pupils are taught in a similar way in the primary National Literacy Strategy so try to build on what they already know.

The sequence moves from reading into writing; its main challenge is to secure the transfer into pupils’ work so the emphasis is on the stages of demonstration and joint composition. For extended written pieces it is helpful to ‘chunk’ the writing, that is, concentrate on one part at a time.

For many pupils, writing development still lags behind reading so time spent on consolidating skills and understanding of how different texts work will probably be required before pupils are able to respond independently without a staged teaching sequence.

Video extract 4: Writing non-fiction (20 minutes)

Watch Jo Shackleton teaching her Year 7 class how to write persuasively. She is using the teaching sequence to help pupils appreciate how persuasive texts are structured and some of the language features often employed. She is focusing on how to structure and link paragraphs.

As you watch, try to note some of the strategies that Jo is using at each stage of the sequence. Focus especially on the ‘teacher demonstration’ and the ‘shared composition’ sections noting how the teacher makes her choices clear through ‘thinking aloud’.

How does thinking aloud support pupils’ understanding of the writing/composing process?
Teaching skills for demonstration and shared writing

- Keep the focus on the objective.
- Rehearse sentences aloud before writing.
- Constantly reread aloud what you have written.
- Model writing one step at a time.
- Prompt, sifting, analyse and evaluate pupils’ contributions.

When planning a lesson to develop pupils’ written responses, find an opportunity to select one or two writing objectives and plan to model and share the writing with pupils before asking them to do it on their own. See if the quality of their writing shows some improvement as a result of your more explicit teaching.

FAQs

I can see that modelling is helpful in showing pupils how the writing process works but I don’t like turning my back to the class while I write on the board as trouble often starts while they are waiting for me to write the model up. How can I manage this?

You could use an OHT which means you are facing the class while you write. This would also enable you to do some of the writing in advance (on an acetate) so that you can construct the parts crucial to the teaching of the lesson objective for and with pupils.

There isn’t enough time in our 45-minute English lessons to get through the whole process of the recommended sequence for teaching writing. How can I resolve this?

You could split the sequence between lessons (as Jo Shackleton does with her class in video extract 4). You will need to think carefully as to where to break and how you will pick up the learning again after a gap in order to move pupils on.

Ready for more?

- Look at the teacher’s annotated copy (appendix 2) of the persuasive text used in video extract 3 in English department training: Year 9 on page 19 of the Course handbook (DfEE 0234/2001).
- Read through the following sections of English department training 2001 (DfEE 0234/2001): Unit 8 reading; Unit 4 writing non-fiction; Unit 6 writing narrative.
### Unit 5: Teacher introductions

#### Personal record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I am going to try</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What went well and why</th>
<th>What didn't work well and why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Next time I will try ...
Preparatory task

In your notebook write down three or four challenges that teaching speaking and listening present for you.

Aims

- To help teachers plan effective lessons that raise standards of speaking and listening.
- To identify effective strategies and a teaching sequence for speaking and listening.

While pupils will have had many opportunities for speaking and listening activities at primary school, more focused and planned opportunities to develop these skills further are required at Key Stage 3. Although teachers believe that they give prominence to discussion, observational research does not support this. Pupils may have plenty of opportunities for talk but teachers are often unsure of what and how to teach. A teaching sequence similar to that for teaching writing is recommended here.

A sequence for teaching speaking and listening
Video extract 5: Modelling speaking and listening  (6 minutes)

Now watch Clare Taegar modelling explanatory talk for her inner-city Year 8 class and observe how she defines the speaking and listening conventions and encourages effective evaluation skills.

Note or discuss the use made of explicit criteria for:
• formal presentational talk;
• evaluating the formal presentations of others.

Teaching speaking and listening

Here is some good advice to bear in mind when you are planning to teach speaking and listening.
• Establish a range of purposes and audiences from the objectives for each year.
• Negotiate and enforce a clear set of ground rules and explore features of successful speaking and listening with pupils.
• Encourage reflection on strengths and weaknesses.
• Teach language conventions for different contexts.
• Set up discussion carefully, relating it to learning outcome.
• Plan some objectives to integrate with reading and writing.
• Plan short specific set-piece units to teach other objectives separately.
• Establish curriculum targets for particular groups of pupils.

Real discussion is more likely to ensue if there is an authentic task, a reason to communicate and where ground rules have been negotiated with pupils.

Listening triads in Year 7: Arrange pupils in groups of three; they then split to work on one (of three) activities or texts (whole class, three topics, groups A, B and C). Pupils then reform into listening triads. Pupil A explains their activity, pupil B listens and questions for further clarification, pupil C must stay silent, listen and note two further questions to ask at the end of the round. Pupils then swap roles until all three have had their turns at speaking.

Look at the Year 7 speaking and listening objectives in your Framework and consider the usefulness of listening triads for introducing pupils to structured group discussion.
FAQs

Talk is so fleeting and ephemeral that I worry that I won’t have any ‘outcome’ by the end of the lesson to show for it. Does this matter?

You should have a clear lesson plan to show for its organisation and feedback from the pupils. Occasionally, you could also video or tape-record formal presentations to give them status. Avoid the temptation to feel that talk has to be justified through a written outcome. Pupils need to know that you value and give status to purposeful talk for its own sake.

I know that talk can support learning but I worry about losing control of the class. How do I set this up with my classes?

Be clear about your expectations of talking and listening and involve pupils in discussing ground rules as to how it should be conducted. Year 7 pupils will be used to working in this way and you can build on this expectation. Giving pupils responsibility and clear roles and tasks for the small-group work can result in less off-task chat and more purposeful talk (see Unit 7 on organising group work).

Ready for more?

- Planning sheet for talk in English department training: Year 7 Course handbook
- Video extract 5 from English department training 2001: module 7
- Literacy across the curriculum (DfEE 0235/2001) – Module 8 focuses on teaching listening skills
- Year 7 Speaking and listening bank (DfEE 0141/2001) – teaching ideas for Year 7 objectives
- Key objectives bank for Year 7 (DfES 0207/2002), Year 8 (DfES 0206/2002) and Year 9 (DfES 0203/2002) – all include teaching suggestions and assessment activities for speaking and listening.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>What I am going to try</th>
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<td></td>
<td>What didn't work well and why</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Next time I will try...
Optional unit 7
Organising group work

Preparatory task

Consider the following statements.

‘Exploratory talk is that in which partners engage critically but constructively with each other’s ideas. It is an effective way of using language to think…’

‘... the process of education should ensure that every child is aware of its value and able to use it effectively...’

‘However, observational research evidence suggests that very little of it naturally occurs in classrooms when children work together in groups.’

(Taken from Mercer N, Words and Minds: how we use language to think, Routledge 2000)

Why do think this is the case?

Aims

• To consider how pupils can be helped to talk and reason together productively.
• To explore ways and means of organising effective group work.

Why do it?

Purposeful talk and group work is a key feature of the pedagogy underpinning the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Exploratory talk is an effective way of using language to think and is one of the building blocks to literacy. Effective discussion in English can result in gains in pupils’ ability to recall, understand and respond to aesthetic elements in literature, and negotiate points of view in other contexts. Pupils coming up from primary schools are used to working together cooperatively in small groups and in taking responsibility for resources and outcomes. We can have similar expectations of them in Key Stage 3.

Talk enables us to:
• share information and evidence;
• build and maintain social relationships;
• provide guidance;
• think together;
• extend and consolidate thinking processes.

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When to use it?

During the development stage of the lesson when you want to see pupils applying their understanding from the whole-class teaching episode to different contexts. By working with others, pupils are able to contribute, reflect, discuss and negotiate ideas – the whole often being greater than the sum of the parts.

Managing group talk

When you ask pupils to work together, it is important to give them guidance about how to talk together in groups. Pupils may not be aware of how to use talk to work together effectively; they need to know why working in groups and talk will be beneficial. It is helpful to involve pupils in compiling and agreeing a set of ground rules. These ensure that everyone knows what is expected in discussions and will support productive, exploratory discussion that both teachers and pupils will value.

Establishing ground rules for talk in groups

Classes can create and agree to their own set of ground rules. Here is an example of ground rules developed by one teacher with a class.

- Everyone should:
  - contribute;
  - offer ideas;
  - give reasons for these;
  - share all relevant information;
  - feel free to disagree if they have a good reason;
  - ask others for information and reasons;
  - treat others’ ideas with respect;
  - try to come to an agreement;
  - be prepared to change their mind if they are persuaded by good reasoning.

Productive talk

As you can see from the ground rules, productive group work requires certain ‘talk behaviour’, which includes:
- making suggestions or introducing new ideas;
- supporting others’ suggestions by adding, clarifying or modifying them;
- challenging ideas so that others reflect on their validity;
- questioning others for clarification and elaboration;
- summarising to move the discussion on;
- analysing and evaluating, to make explicit the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas presented to the group.
Group size and composition

Teachers can plan groups of different sizes and make-up for different learning purposes. The main thing is that pupils are clear that you, the teacher, are in control and make the decisions in the classroom. You can share your purpose with them but it should be non-negotiable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group size</th>
<th>Benefits and limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Ensures thinking for self but leaves pupil isolated within own experience and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair</td>
<td>Quick, ensures talk occurs, secure, no desk removal but prone to easy consensus and lacks challenge of range of viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group of 3-4</td>
<td>Diversity without threat, can turn pairs around to create fours without desk removal but social pressures begin to set in and some pupils may not contribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large group of 5-7</td>
<td>Good diversity of ideas and opinion, bridges from small group to whole-class discussion but requires greater management, furniture removal and quiet pupils can be dominated by more vocal members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>Everyone has same experience and teacher can monitor and support the talk but frustrating for some, no contribution from others and risk of domination by teacher or more confident pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Benefits and limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship groups</td>
<td>Secure and comfortable, but prone to consensus and can be threatening to newcomers or class ‘loners’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability groups</td>
<td>Work can be pitched at optimal level of challenge but class setting is visible to pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured mix</td>
<td>Ensures a range of views but reproduces the power relations in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random mix</td>
<td>Gives pupils democratic experience of different partners and views but can create awkward group dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single sex</td>
<td>Socially more comfortable for some but furthers the gender divide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are some of the problems you have experienced with group work in class? How might you deal with these?

Strategies for organising group talk and feedback

- **Pair talk** – talk partners are useful for short, highly focused discussion or rehearsal of ideas before presenting them to the class. Response partners help during the drafting process and work on reading of an unfamiliar text.
- **Pairs to four** – pupils work together in pairs (friendship or boy/girl) and then join up with another pair to explain and compare ideas.
- **Listening triads** – groups of three. Pupils take roles of speaker (explains, comments or expresses opinion), questioner (prompts and seeks clarification), and recorder (makes notes and reports back at end). Pupils change roles for the next round.
• **Envoys** – one person from each group is selected as an envoy and moves to a new group to explain and summarise the views of his/her home group and to find out what the new group thought. The envoys then return ‘home’ and feedback. This avoids repetitive reporting back and creates an active group of listeners for the envoy.

• **Snowball** – pairs discuss an issue, join up to make fours and continue to groups of eight to compare ideas or negotiate a course of action. Finally the whole class is drawn together for feedback from a spokesperson from each group of eight. Promotes more public discussion and debate.

• **Rainbow groups** – ensures that pupils work in a range of different groups. After discussion in the first group, pupils are given numbers or a colour. Pupils join with others holding the same number or colour and report back on the discussion of the original groups.

• **Jigsaw** – a topic is divided into sections. In home groups of four or five, pupils are allocated a section each. They then regroup into exper' groups to work together on their specialist area. They then return to their home groups and are set a task that requires pupils to use all the different areas of knowledge for a joint outcome. Requires advance planning, but is effective because it ensures all pupils participate.

• **Spokesperson** – each group appoints a spokesperson. Repetitious feedback can be avoided by asking each group to cover one new point.

For what purpose and in what context might you use some of the different organisational strategies for group work in your classes?

---

**Focusing the task - some golden rules**

• Groupings should be teacher-managed and planned to suit the task.

• All talk activities, even short ones, should have clear and explicit outcomes (for example, report back to group or class, key points noted on whiteboards or added to larger posters around walls, summary on acetate for OHP).

• Tell the groups how long they have and give time warnings.

• Allocate roles to all group members (e.g. chair, observer, timekeeper, spokesperson, note-taker; or discussion roles: proposer, opposer, devil’s advocate, supporter, summariser, sceptic).

• Structure the talk task around a prompt list, guidelines or a talk frame.

• Indicate and lead the type of talk you expect by providing some sentence starter phrases.

• Use one group member to reflect back on how the group worked and how they might improve in a debriefing or plenary which reflects on the kinds of talk that worked best for the task.

• Every group member has an entitlement to speak and be heard (you can monitor contributions by equal allocations of counters, one to be used each time they speak).

• Feedback can be structured to allow talk to be drafted and built on (e.g. pairs to fours, to eights, building up to whole-class discussion).

• Define the teacher’s role and that of other adults in the classroom (e.g. eavesdropper, temporary group member, interim feedback giver).

• Ensure that group tasks are sufficiently challenging to necessitate collaboration.
FAQs

When I ask pupils to work in groups they always sit with their friends but I am concerned about the amount of work that gets done. How can I make group work more productive?

Pupils need to know that you decide the working arrangements in your classroom, not them. They need to understand that they are grouped with others in different ways for different purposes and outcomes. Meanwhile, if you employ some of the strategies above, for example ‘jigsaw’ or ‘envoy’, they will create different groups from the original ones within a lesson for part of the time.

I can see that group work is a good idea in terms of making the pupils more responsible for their own learning and for that of the group but chaos sometimes ensues as either everybody or nobody wants to be in charge. How can I improve things?

Try allocating roles to group members (see above) with clear expectations about what each one does. You can allocate with your knowledge of the individuals but swap roles around so that pupils undertake different roles and responsibilities within the group.

Ready for more?

‘Thinking together’ – Module12 in Training materials for the foundation subjects (DfES 0350/2002)
## Unit 7: Organising group work  Personal record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I am going to try</th>
<th>What else I need to find out</th>
<th>How did it go?</th>
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<td></td>
<td>What went well and why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Next time I will try...**
Optional unit 8
Guided and independent work

Preparatory task

What do you think are the main differences between guided and group work? Draw a line with ‘teacher modelling’ at the one end and ‘sustained independent work’ at the other. Where would you position ‘guided work’?

Aims

• To develop an understanding of the value and significance of the role of guided reading and writing as important teaching opportunities to develop pupils as readers and writers.

What is guided work?

A selected small group of six to eight pupils work with the teacher. The session is planned, short and focused (about 20 minutes).

Guided reading: why do it?

• Pupils are more closely supported in developing an understanding of the way language and structure of texts are matched to writer’s intentions.
• It activates their expectations of what they are about to read through prediction and by considering specific words and phrases they will encounter.
• It articulates a range of reading strategies that pupils will use.
• It allows a short period of independent reading followed by a joint task.
• It focuses questioning and discussion designed to deepen understanding of textual features.
• It emphasises pupils’ explaining and expanding responses orally.
• It ends with a short period of reflection and review, where pupils are asked to summarise what they have learnt about the text.
Guided reading: how to do it

These are the key features of guided reading.
• Pupils are grouped by ability, need or focus.
• The teacher plans the session, following an instructional sequence.
• The teacher works with the group for a short, focused session.
• Pupils spend some time reading independently.
• The teacher reviews understanding and use of strategies with the group.
• Follow-up tasks and targets are set.

A sequence for teaching guided reading

Video extract 6: Guided reading (15 minutes)

Melanie Pope works with a group of Year 8 pupils to extend their reading strategies for inference and deduction using the class novel (Louis Sachar's Holes) and the teaching sequence above.

How does the teaching sequence and attention of the teacher develop their skills and confidence?
Bridging from reading into writing

In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils will be reading and responding to the text not only as readers but also to increase their understanding of how writers craft texts. This understanding and the explicit discussion about authorial choices then form a useful bridge into the development of pupils’ own writing.

Generating a response as a reader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The reader asks</th>
<th>The teacher guides pupils to ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did I respond?</td>
<td>Explore first responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What made me respond that way?</td>
<td>Identify features and techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's the writer getting at?</td>
<td>Define the writer’s overarching purpose, point or moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the writer set me/it up?</td>
<td>Articulate the writer’s strategy</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Writing a response to text

The reverse order is more likely, so teachers may offer scaffolding frames such as:
- The writer’s overarching purpose is ...
- The writer’s strategy is ...
- The writer uses ... (a technique) to ... (evidence explained) repeated
- The overall effect on the reader is ...

Video extract 7: Bridging from reading to writing (6 minutes)

Haley Davies-Edwards explains how critical reading helps to develop the critical writing of her Year 9 pupils. How does she support pupils’ development as critical writers?

Guided writing: why do it?

Guided writing can be very effective in consolidating existing skills as well as encouraging and extending others. It should occur after a shared session with the whole class and careful thought needs to be given to the composition of groups and to the tasks that others will be doing whilst you are working with the guided group.
A sequence for teaching guided writing

Video extract 8: Guided writing (6 minutes)

Johnnie Pavey works with a group of Year 9 pupils to revise and improve their written responses to a text. How does the teacher help pupils recognise the 'false notes' in their written work?
Try to work with a guided group, selected for a particular purpose, within a drafting or editing episode of one of your lessons during the next couple of weeks. Plan your interventions and questions carefully, based upon a careful assessment of pupils’ needs and the objectives for the lesson.

**Moving towards independent work**

Homework allows pupils a chance to work independently and to put into practice some of the strategies they have learnt in class. Most exam and test situations depend on silent, timed, independent work so pupils will need practice at this. There should also be some time for pupils to work independently in class, perhaps while the teacher is working with a guided group. Chunking up work, especially for extended written pieces, is helpful so that pupils are able to focus on particular writing tasks that build towards a more sustained piece.

What is the role of the teacher during independent work?

**FAQ**

**What is the difference between guided reading and group reading?**

Group reading is carried out by groups of pupils, managed by themselves, working to a task sheet without the direct intervention of the teacher at the time (though the tasks will have been planned in advance). It is a supportive step towards independence and allows pupils to read and discuss texts communally.

**Ready for more?**

- Borrow and read Module 4, Questioning, in Training materials for the foundation subjects (DfES 0350/2002).
- In the English department training: Year 9 Course handbook (DfEE 0234/2001), look at the four teaching sequences for guided writing (handouts 3.6–3.9) that can be used to match the task in hand.
- Look at the Group reading materials developed by the Key Stage 3 Strategy with the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), available on the Key Stage 3 Standards and NATE websites.
Unit 8: Guided and independent work  Personal record

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Next time I will try ...
Preparatory task

What do you understand by a ‘plenary session’? Write down some of the ways you have ended English lessons. Does it go to plan or does time run out? How have you involved pupils in this part of the lesson? Do you sometimes involve pupils in reflection at other points? Give an example.

Aims

• To develop an understanding of the value and significance of plenaries.
• To promote the use of a range of planned plenary opportunities as part of all lessons.

What are they?

Plenaries offer opportunities to draw pupils together in order to summarise and take stock of the learning so far. They involve the whole class in reflecting together. They traditionally occur at the end of lessons but can also be planned at strategic points in the teaching sequence. Used in this way, they can offer recursive opportunities to highlight and review how pupils have learned and can help to consolidate and extend the learning by determining next steps.

Why do them?

Plenaries enable pupils to reflect on their learning and how they might apply this in other areas of work. They create opportunities for teachers to:
• help pupils articulate and crystallise their learning – this explicit reflection supports other pupils’ understanding;
• value the achievements of individuals and the class and create a sense of achievement or gain – develop pupils’ perception of themselves as learners;
• assess pupils’ learning against the objectives and plan accordingly – develop assessment for learning.
How to do them?

Many teachers find plenaries difficult to plan. Here is what Ofsted says about plenary sessions in the report on the Key Stage 3 pilot in 2000/2001.

From the outset plenaries were often the weakest part of the lesson. Good planning was critical to the success of the plenaries. Often there was insufficient time for them, typically because teachers underestimated the time required for activities in the main part of the lesson. Plenaries were often the least active part of lessons. Teachers tended merely to sum up what happened during the main phase and pupils did not have the opportunity to articulate what they had learnt. When pupils had such opportunities, they proved an important part of the learning process."

The report concludes that it is important in the full implementation of the Strategy that:

• plenary sessions in lessons are used flexibly and geared to giving pupils an opportunity to say what they have learnt.

When to use them?

Use summatively and throughout a lesson whenever you want to draw the class together to reflect on learning. Plenaries can be used to:

• draw together what has been learnt, to highlight the most important (rather than the most recent) points, to summarise key facts, ideas and vocabulary, and stress what needs to be remembered;
• generalise from examples generated earlier in the lesson;
• go through an exercise, question pupils and rectify any remaining misunderstandings;
• make links to other work and what the class will go on to do next;
• highlight not only what pupils have learnt but also how they have learnt;
• highlight the progress pupils have made and remind them about their personal targets.

Video extract 9: Plenaries (5 minutes)

Watch the extracts from three lessons in Years 7 and 8, put together here to show points at which teachers are reviewing learning with their pupils. How did the teachers enable the pupils to reflect on their learning?
How to use them

Plenaries must be planned. Secure and allow enough time and make sure that the pupils are active in doing the work of reflecting on what and how they have learnt rather than you, the teacher, just summing up for them. Push and extend pupils’ thinking and feedback beyond reiteration through questioning. Plenaries should link carefully to the objectives, outcomes and success criteria for the lesson as a whole. Give pupils notice – an advance warning that you will ask one selected group (and some unnamed ‘volunteers’) for feedback at the end of the task.

Plenaries as staging posts or a final plenary?

Choose and plan the type of plenary that best fits the lesson’s purpose. It is helpful in some lesson designs to use mini-plenaries after each episode of the lesson. Use varied strategies to appeal to all the preferred learning styles over a period of time and change routines so that they don’t get too predictable.

Plan three plenaries for three lessons that each have a different purpose. Include some questions to direct at particular pupils to extend their thinking. Ask your mentor or a colleague to go through them in advance to help you predict any potential hazards or challenges.

FAQs

We often get pupils to ‘show and tell’ the group’s work at the end of the lessons but it results in low-level exchanges. What would make for a better plenary session?

This is because this practice encourages pupils to give a narrative review of their work rather than evaluate what and how they learnt. Pupils can show their work during the plenary but it needs to be done in order to evaluate outcomes and processes.

I often feel that I am simply repeating the objectives at the end of the lesson rather than the pupils contributing or gaining anything from the plenary. How can I involve the pupils more?

Ask pupils to use paired or shared talk to articulate the main things that helped them achieve the objectives before you ask for contributions to the class. You can use sentence starters on the OHP/whiteboard or on prompt cards for less confident speakers: ‘Two things that I need to think about when I… are…’.

Ready for more?

- Training materials for foundation subjects (DFES 0350/2002):
  Module 8 – Plenaries
- Website flier on plenaries: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3
## Unit 9: Plenaries  Personal record

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### Next time I will try ...

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### Preparatory task

What is the policy for marking in your present school? Does the English department have a version of this? Collect copies of any policies.

What is the purpose of marking pupils’ work? Photocopy a piece of pupil’s work from Key Stage 3 where you felt your marking was effective.

### Aims

- To suggest how the value of marking can be increased for pupils.
- To develop an approach to marking which is formative and actively involves pupils.

### The purpose of marking

- To give feedback to pupils to help them to improve aspects of their writing.
- To provide a “reader” – a responsive audience for pupils’ writing.
- To encourage and motivate pupils to communicate effectively.
- To monitor learning progress against the objectives of a particular piece of teaching.
- To obtain feedback on what pupils can do independently.
Assessment of learning and assessment for learning

Assessment of learning is known as **summative** assessment. This tends to be carried out at the end of a unit or key stage and results will probably be reported in the form of grades, marks or levels. Because the information is sometimes used comparatively, reliability and validity are paramount. This information helps school and subject leaders identify trends, track the progress of pupils over time and set realistic numerical targets for cohorts of pupils.

Assessment for learning is known as **formative** assessment. It takes place all the time in classrooms and involves gathering and interpreting evidence about pupils’ learning and using this to decide what the next steps might be. This form of assessment involves feedback between pupils and teachers to modify the teaching and learning that needs to occur. Marking is just one aspect of a larger recursive process that informs the next steps.

Involving pupils

A key feature of effective formative marking is the active involvement of pupils in the process. Here are some alternative activities to the teacher marking books outside the lesson.

- **Giving feedback during class writing time at the point of writing.** Use with guided groups or during sustained writing time.
- **Self-checking.** Use with coursework or assessment tasks. Use prompt cards to focus attention onto specific language features.
- **Response partners.** Use when developing critical reading skills to develop an understanding of the needs of the reader.
- **Self-marking.** Use to encourage self-reliance when you want to know whether the pupil is developing a measure of their own work over shorter pieces.
- **Reviewing with a group of pupils.** Use after a substantial piece of writing when it is clear that a group of pupils would benefit from your tackling a common issue.

Using two columns and the list above, write down what the advantages (pluses) of each approach to marking might be and then think of the limitations (minuses).

Key principles of marking

- Make the marking criteria explicit to pupils – tell them what features you will be looking for (it helps to share these with parents too).
- Mark selectively. Focus on the skills that have been features of the main lesson objectives. Relate these to the meaning and purpose of the piece of work.
- Select high value features for marking and comment on features from which the pupil can generalise and apply the advice to other written pieces.
- Prompt and praise. Give specific prompts that tell pupils exactly what and where they need to improve during writing.
- Expect active engagement from pupils. Ensure they self-check prior to submitting work and respond to the prompts afterwards. Follow this up.
• Develop a consistent uncomplicated approach that pupils, parents and other teachers can understand.
• Return work promptly.

Go back to the piece of work you photocopied before this unit. What would you change if you were to mark the same piece again? Your comments? Your marking method?

Before you collect in the next piece of work, ask pupils to work in pairs in class and to comment on specific features of their partner’s writing linked to your teaching. Get them to note on whiteboards two things the other person has done effectively and one thing to work on. Run a plenary session where the pupils contribute good examples and ask them to explain why they are effective. What have they learnt? How do these relate to the lesson objectives?

FAQ

Can you help me? A parent has complained that I haven’t corrected all the spelling mistakes in her child’s piece where the criteria for marking was paragraphing and sentence variety.

Marking is a teaching tool so it is important to select specific spellings that are appropriate to teach. Try to make your marking focus explicit to both pupils and parents (a note in books or diaries?). If the parent is particularly concerned about spelling you could select a number of key spellings that you want pupils to focus upon in each piece of work. You could also encourage the pupil to use a ‘spelling strategies prompt sheet’, glued into the workbook or diary for reference during lessons and at home.

Ready for more?

• Black P and William D (1998) Inside the black box, King’s College, London
• Training materials for foundation subjects (DfES 0350/2002):
  Module 1 – Assessment for learning in everyday lessons
• Training materials for foundation subjects (DfES 0350/2002):
  Module 2 – The formative use of summative assessment
• www.assessment-reform-group.org.uk
### Unit 10: Marking  Personal record

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Next time I will try ...
Appendix 1
Observation aide memoire

The start of the lesson