The English Coordination Group

GCSE English

The Revision Guide

First Edition — for 1999 and beyond

Edited by Richard Parsons
The Three Rules for English Revision

Some people say that you can’t revise English. They’re wrong. You can seriously improve your Coursework and Exam grades just by following three simple steps.

1) You must use accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Accurate grammar means knowing the rules about how words relate to each other, which will help you write clear Coursework and Exam essays.

Accurate spelling means knowing how to write words down correctly.

Accurate punctuation means breaking up your writing with the correct pause marks to make it clear for the Examiners to read and understand.

2) Always look for style, tone and context when you read.

Style means the way that language, vocabulary and tone are used to create effects when you read any book or watch a play or film.

Tone means the feeling of a passage; how it makes you react.

Context means any extra information around a text, like where and when it was written, and who wrote it. It’s not part of the text but it’s relevant to studying it.

3) You must answer the exact question.

Always read the question carefully before starting your answer.

Think about exactly what it wants you to do and watch out for any tricks.

Plan what your answer will be and make sure that whatever you write sticks to the point and tries to answer the question, even if you don’t know much about it.
Introduction

The English Coordination Group has been set up with the aim of producing specialised revision material for National Curriculum English. This book provides concise coverage of the Key Stage Four syllabus for GCSE English up to Higher Level with particular emphasis on essential Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation.

Our Guides have three features which set them apart from the rest:

**Careful and Concise Explanations and Rules**

We work hard to give accurate, concise and carefully written details on each topic. This guide places particular emphasis on learning Thirty Rules to improve Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation — areas where students frequently lose valuable marks.

**Deliberate Use of Humour**

We consider the humour to be an essential part of our Revision Guides. It’s there to keep the reader interested and entertained, and we are certain that it greatly assists their learning. We don’t expect to win any awards for it though...

**Provision of Models for Critical Reading and Writing**

This guide offers a range of simplified models to introduce the key skills and techniques of literary criticism for fiction and non-fiction texts. These techniques include comprehension, critical reading, essay writing and personal writing skills. We also give practical advice on reading and writing about different styles of text — focusing on language, tone, bias and context.
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Learning the Rules

This book is about how to pick up good marks for GCSE English or English Literature. This first Section will tell you what you can do to improve your work — and improve your marks too.

You Need Two Skills to Improve Your Marks

1) Make sure you don’t make any mistakes in your grammar, spelling or punctuation.
2) Practice writing clearly and accurately, so that anyone reading your work will understand exactly what you mean.

You Can Do Well Even if You Find English Boring

1) The secret is learning the key skills of studying English. Skills are like shortcuts — when you know about them, they can make your life much easier.
2) Make sure you read texts properly — that means reading carefully for the important points.
3) These skills can be used with any books you read — all you need to do is practise.
4) Start by practising with books you like. Remember, if you like a book then you should show that you like it when you write about it. Look at Section Four, P.35, on comprehension skills.
5) For GCSE, you may have to read and write about books you don’t like. If you’ve practised enough, then this won’t matter. You’ll have the skills to find out the vital information and to write about it in an interesting way.

REMEMBER: even if you think a book is boring, you can still write about it in an interesting way. Learn the rules for essay writing in Section Seven, P.64.

Practise Writing Clear, Simple Personal Essays

1) Personal essays always seem much easier than writing about literature. That’s why most people write very bad essays, and lose marks.
2) You need to learn the different essay styles which the Examiners ask for.
3) Read the question carefully to work out what it’s asking you to do.
4) If you are asked to give an opinion on a topic, then give a balanced argument (see P.69). Give both sides of the case and then explain why you would choose one side over the other.
5) If you have to write about personal experience, make sure you write about your feelings as well as what happened. Try to make the story come to life for the reader. Look at PR.82-83.

Be Prepared for Your Coursework Deadline

1) Your Coursework folder will need to be complete by a certain date.
2) That means you can write new essays for it up until the last day.
   Ask your teacher where your problem areas are.
3) You must include essays to fit the categories given by your syllabus.
4) Ask your teacher what these are — then try to work on the categories where your work will receive the lowest grade. You can always improve your Coursework.
5) Ask your teacher if you can rewrite some of your work to see if you can get higher marks.
6) Don’t leave it to the last minute to improve your Coursework. If you can keep working on your essays throughout your course, then you’ll definitely improve your folder — and your marks.

Imagine your ’phone is cut off — you have a deadline...

There’s really no time to lose. If you want to do well in English or English literature, then you need to start learning and practising the main skills now. Each Section in this book covers a key area of your course, so you must work through each one. Don’t forget your Coursework either.
Standard English is the formal English that you need to use when you write in Coursework or in the Exam. A lot of people confuse this with "speaking posh" — but it's not the same thing.

**Standard English is just Formal English**

1) Standard English is the form of English you learn in school.
2) All written English should be standard — that means it should be clear enough for anyone in Britain to understand it.
3) Standard English developed as the main form of printed English in the 15th Century. At the time, every region of Britain used to spell words differently, but printers needed a fixed spelling.
4) Printers like Caxton chose the East Midlands dialect form which was used in London and the South East.
5) Soon standard English replaced all written dialect forms — the other forms of English spoken around the country. It also replaced French and Latin in Law and in academic work.
6) In the 18th Century, people wrote dictionaries and grammar books which standardized spelling — Dr Johnson’s Dictionary of 1755 fixed many of the spellings we still use today.

**WARNING:** some people say that if you don’t speak standard English, then you don’t speak properly. They are wrong. The important thing is being clear.

**The Four Main Features of Standard English**

1) All written English should be standard English — any grammar rules you learn are for standard English, and you will definitely need to learn them to avoid making mistakes in your work.
2) The rules of standard English mean using the correct forms of words with the correct spellings.
3) When you are doing your Speaking tests, you must use the forms of standard English grammar.
4) Your accent and your pronunciation don’t have anything to do with standard English — the secret is avoiding any local dialect words or phrases. Learn the key grammar rules (p.15 on).

**How to Use Standard English**

1) Avoid slang words — words that your teachers or parents wouldn’t understand. You’ll lose marks if the Examiners can’t understand what you say or write.
2) Don’t use dialect words. Every region has words or phrases that are only used there. Don’t use them in your Coursework, because you won’t be understood.
3) Make sure you revise grammar and punctuation in Section Three, and learn the list of commonly misspelled words at the end of this book.

**Don’t Use Clichés — You’ll Lose Marks for being Boring**

1) Clichés are ideas or sayings which have been used so often that they’ve become boring and unoriginal.
2) Phrases like, “As good as it gets”; “At the end of the day”; “On the other hand”; “In the fullness of time,” are all clichés. So are images like, “as fierce as a lion”; “as cunning as a fox”; “as red as a beetroot.”
3) These were all original and vivid images once, but they have been used so often that they don’t mean much any more.
4) If you use them, you will sound boring and unimaginative — that could mean you lose marks for writing and speaking style. So avoid clichés.

**Standard English — sounds like a kind of fry-up...**

Spend some time revising grammar, spelling and punctuation — especially if you find them tough.

**SECTION ONE — HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR MARKS**
Jargon and Abbreviations

Here are two more general points of English which people frequently lose marks for. Make sure you learn when to use them and when to avoid them — it could make a difference to your grade.

Jargon is Technical Language — Try to Avoid it

1) Jargon means language used by any group of people that can’t be understood unless you’re part of the group.
2) This means that most jargon is meaningless to a lot of people.
3) Doctors, Lawyers, Teachers and even Poets and Actors all use their own forms of jargon — special technical words and phrases that help them to do their jobs.
4) Different sports and hobbies also have jargon words — football has words like “offside,” or “indirect free kick” which don’t mean anything unless you know about football.
5) Never use jargon in your speaking or written work — if you give a talk, make sure that any technical words for a hobby or a sport are explained so that everyone understands.
6) Avoid using literary jargon in essays unless you know exactly what the words mean, and can explain them — especially the word “irony” which most people use wrongly. There’s always a simple way to say things — make sure your written work is always clear to understand.

Abbreviations are Short Forms of Words

1) Abbreviations are used to make writing easier. They are shortened forms of words which only have a few letters.
2) Abbreviations don’t need full stops in modern usage — just leave space around them and punctuate the sentence as normal (see P.27).

Common Abbreviations You Should Learn

eg comes from the Latin exempla gratia = for example
etc comes from the Latin et cetera = and the rest; and so on (not etc)
ie comes from the Latin id est = that is (clarifying a point)
NB comes from the Latin nota bene = note well
PS comes from the Latin post scriptum = for adding a note to the end of a letter

Mr is the short form of Mister
Ms is used to address any woman instead of Miss or Mrs

am comes from the Latin ante meridian = before noon (ie the morning)
pm comes from the Latin post meridian = after noon (ie the afternoon)
BC means Before Christ
AD comes from the Latin anno domini = in the year of Our Lord (eg AD 2004)

Remember the Three Rules for Abbreviations

1) Don’t use eg, ie or etc in formal written work like essays. Only use them in letters or notes.
2) Don’t confuse eg and ie; eg is used to give an example — ie is used to explain something.
3) Never write etc instead of etc — it’s a careless mistake which looks sloppy.

Don’t abbreviate in essays — you’ll be caught short...

Three short rules for abbreviations to learn — and don’t forget to avoid jargon in your work too.

SECTION ONE — HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR MARKS
What It All Means

Speaking and Listening are about expressing yourself clearly and showing you can respond to other people's ideas. That can only come with practice.

The Key Skills You Must Practise

1) Most people speak too much and fail to communicate important information. Their skills never improve because they don't listen properly.
2) The first key skill is learning to listen to people — what they're saying to you and also what they don't say. That's the only way to respond.
3) You need to listen to other people, to the TV or to adverts critically — ask yourself why people say certain things and how you should react.
4) The other key skill is expressing yourself clearly. That means working out the most important piece of information you have to communicate, and telling other people so that they understand it.
5) Talk clearly and plainly — long and fancy words are useless if no-one understands what you're saying.
6) Take the time to practice your Listening and Speaking skills — then you'll find it easier to put your ideas across clearly.
7) That will help you to sound relaxed, and avoid nervousness.
8) Practising these skills will also help your written work too.

How They Assess Your Skills

Most GCSE courses assess your Speaking and Listening skills throughout your course — so that means you've got to work at them all the time. It's very important you keep practising.

Getting the Best Marks

1) Oral work counts for 20% of your final grade. You'll need to do a variety of practical tests in different categories but only the best mark in each category counts towards your final grade.
2) You must prepare for each practical beforehand — this will help your grade.
3) Spend time thinking about how you did afterwards — learn from your mistakes.
4) Make sure you know exactly what you've got to do for any practical — there are different styles of Speaking test.
5) Learn the special skills you need for each style of test — just work your way through this Section, one skill at a time.
6) Then practise so that you won't get nervous when you speak in front of the class.

Don't worry about the Speaking Exam — it's all talk...

Hmm... It looks like a lot to learn — and some people really hate speaking in public. Don't worry, though. If you're organised and you know what to expect, then you can face your Speaking tests with a lot of confidence. Remember — no-one wants you to do badly. The secret is being prepared, and practising as often as you can. Don't forget — it's only your best mark in each category that counts. That means you can have more than one go at each category.
Basic Speaking Skills

So here's what the Examiners are going to be testing you on in your Speaking practicals.

There are Three Main Categories of Practical Test

Any particular test you have to do will be assessed according to which category it is in.

Categories are:

1) explain – describe – narrate
2) explore – analyse – imagine
3) discuss – argue – persuade

A debate would be category 3. Giving a talk or having a discussion could fit any category, depending on the details of the activities asked for.

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<td>Mature and assured use of standard English</td>
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<td>2) Listen, understand and respond appropriately to others</td>
<td>Perceptive listening to a range of complex speech</td>
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<td>3) Formulate, clarify and express ideas</td>
<td>Understanding of challenging ideas</td>
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<td>4) Adapt speech to a widening range of circumstances and demands</td>
<td>Exceptional originality and flair in adapting to task and audience</td>
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Three Talking Points to Get You Started

Think about these things before you start any Speaking practical — learn and remember them.

1) COURTESY — Be polite at all times, especially when other people ask questions, or when they're doing their tests. If you're polite, they'll be on your side when you do your tests.

2) AUDIENCE — Think about who you're talking to. You'll be speaking to a big group so you have to keep people's attention. Tell a joke, or use a visual aid to make your talk more interesting. Avoid reading from notes — you'll lose marks. Just keep it short, clear and to the point.

3) PURPOSE — You need to get your information across in an interesting way, as clearly as possible.

REMEMBER: CAP (Courtesy, Audience, Purpose)

Everything comes in threes — except buses...

Three categories and three talking points to remember. The categories aren't very specific, which is definitely a good thing — it means you can use almost any Speaking practical in any category. Don't worry about the requirements, though. Concentrate on applying CAP — think about what you have to say, who you're saying it to and how you're going to say it.

Section Two — Speaking and Listening
Using Clear English

The language you use says a lot about you — and it’s very important you use clear language in your Speaking tests. That’s why we need to talk about standard English again.

Standard English is basic Formal Language

1) Everyone in Britain speaks different versions of English — sometimes with accents and sometimes with different local words that are difficult to understand.

2) Standard English is just the formal English we use that avoids any local dialect words and helps people all over the country to understand each other when they speak.

Speaking Clearly is Essential

1) People from different places and cultures may pronounce words with different accents.

2) Accents are cool — they’re part of people’s characters — but it’s also important that everyone around the country can communicate clearly, whatever accent they may have.

3) Standard English developed from the form of English used for the first printing presses in the late Middle Ages (for more on standard English, see P.2).

4) Remember — this doesn’t mean standard English is better than other dialects. The main thing is that you use it clearly when you speak in class and in your Speaking practicals.

Use Vocab and Grammar With Care

Using standard English means following some simple rules.

1) Avoid saying “OK” or “like” at the end of every sentence — they sound careless.

2) Don’t use slang words that some people might not understand. Slang words you use with your friends aren’t always clear — so think before you speak.

3) Don’t use clichés — corny phrases that people use all the time, without thinking. They will make you boring to listen to: for example, “at the end of the day”; “sick as a parrot”.

4) Watch you don’t make any grammatical mistakes — spend some time going over the Grammar Section of this book (see P.16 onwards):

REMEMBER — Think what you’re saying: “I was sitting...” NOT “I were sitting...”

5) Avoid using double negatives in a sentence — eg “I don’t never want to go back.”

Keep in mind that two negatives make a positive. That means if you say “don’t” and “never” the negatives cancel each other out, and the sentence means you do want to go back.

6) When you do a Speaking Practical, look up any difficult words you want to use in advance. Make sure you take a note of the meaning. If you understand what a word means, you won’t use it in the wrong place — and that means you won’t lose marks.

You must speak properly — like what I do...

Time to stop and reflect — think about whether your English is clear enough for the Speaking test. That doesn’t mean changing the way you speak, or spending years learning a posh accent. It just means checking your grammar, and making sure that other people can understand you. Try recording your own voice and listening to yourself speak — it sounds horrible, but it really helps.

Section Two — Speaking and Listening
Holding a Conversation

Conversations are the **best way** to practise the skills of **listening**, **understanding** and **responding** that will help you earn **top marks** in your Speaking tests. So make sure you revise all this carefully.

**Learn to be a Good Listener**

1. **Concentrate** on what the **other** person is saying. This means you won’t **miss** anything and you’ll make them feel more relaxed.
2. You should look them **in the eye** and seem **interested** in what they’re saying — be an encouraging and sympathetic listener.
3. If you’re unsure of a point they’ve made, politely **ask** for it to be **repeated** more clearly or **re-phrase** it yourself, asking whether that was what the speaker meant.
4. **Listen** for the speaker’s **tone** — see if you can pick up their **mood** or if their ideas sound confused. See if they repeat themselves.
5. **Don’t interrupt** speakers in mid-flow. Let them **finish** before you have your say.

**And in Response — Just be Clear and Polite**

1. Respond to what the other person **actually said** and not just what you **thought** they said.
   Listen **carefully** and **think** before you speak.
2. Always respond **constructively** — talk about any **good things** that the other person said.
3. If you want to **criticise**, then be critical about their **opinion**, explaining fully **why** you think their argument is wrong. **Never** attack people personally — you’ll **lose marks** in a practical test.
4. If you are going to **criticise** then you’ve got to be sure that your own **views** make sense. Never criticise people if they are talking about subjects you don’t understand. Ask them to **explain**.
5. **Don’t be vague** — back up anything you say with **examples**. Try to be interesting and organised in what you say. And most of all, **stick to the point**.
6. **Never generalise** — comments like “Everyone knows” or “It’s obvious” **don’t help** your case if you don’t give evidence. Generalising makes people sound **arrogant** — so don’t do it.

**Answering Questions — and giving Clear Answers**

1. If anyone asks you a **question** in class, make sure you **listen** to what they ask, and try to answer it **clearly**. Be organised and **don’t get flustered**.
2. Sometimes you may need to **think** about your answer — so **ask the questioner** if you can have some **time** to think. Tell them you’ll **come back** to the question in a moment.
3. **Never** allow an awkward pause — just keep going. If **you** are speaking then you have every right to ask people with questions to **wait** until you’re finished. But do it **politely**.
4. If you use any **technical words** then explain them as you go along, otherwise people won’t understand you — for example, if you talk about rock climbing or karate.
5. Remember what you’ve already said — **don’t contradict yourself** (see P.68 on Argument).
6. The only way to improve is to **practise** and to ask people for **feedback** when it’s all over.

**Giving good answers — a question of practice...**

Think about it — the best way to practise your speaking skills is **conversation**. Be careful, though — it’s not just **talking**, but **listening** as well. You need **both** of these skills when you answer questions in class — always **think** before you speak, and never **contradict** yourself.

*SECTION TWO — SPEAKING AND LISTENING*
Giving A Talk

Giving a talk is a frightening business — it isn’t always compulsory, but you still need to learn the key skills to help you speak in public.

Choose a Topic You Know About

1) Don’t talk about topics that you don’t understand and can’t explain properly — choose something you know about.
2) This should make you more confident — if you know about the topic then you can be enthusiastic about it.
3) Then comes the really tricky part; you need to make it interesting for your listeners. The secret of this is planning.

Planning a Talk — the entertaining kind

1) Don’t write out every single word you’re going to say — your talk will just be boring. Make a simple plan that helps to relax you.
2) You must grab your audience’s attention right from the start — tell a brief story, give a relevant statistic or use a visual aid to illustrate the main point of your talk. It must be really striking.
3) Once you’ve got their attention, you have to keep it. Make sure people follow what you say.
4) After your opening, you’ll need to introduce your topic, explain what you are going to tell them and then present your information in a clear and logical form.
5) Don’t look at your notes the whole time. Watch your audience to see if they understand.
6) Explain anything technical as you go along. Don’t be afraid to repeat things until they are clear.
7) Humour is a good way to keep people’s attention — but not too much or you can lose control of the audience. If people have questions then you can ask them to wait until you have finished.
8) Finish on a high note — sum up your talk and end with a story, a joke or even an appeal to people’s consciences. For more details on how to prepare a balanced argument see P.69.

REMEMBER: Don’t write notes in full — use simple cards you can read at a glance. Avoid reading them out — you’re giving a talk to the audience, not to your notes.

You can use Props to Focus people’s attention

1) There are two kinds of prop — the first is a visual aid such as a poster, video, slide show, map or diagram which you have up at the front.
2) You can use these to illustrate things mentioned during the talk.
3) The other kind is a demonstration, which can work in two ways.
4) You can perform a demonstration at the front — for example, making a salad or showing how to perform first aid on a classmate.
5) You can pass a prop around the room for people to look at, touch or even taste — a pet tarantula, for example, or homemade biscuits.
6) Try to choose unusual props but remember that too many will spoil the flow of the talk — and passing things around takes up a lot of time.

A good talk — more props than a rugby match...

Using props is a great way to grab people’s attention — but you won’t keep it unless your talk is well planned in the first place. Most importantly of all, don’t read from your notes.

Section Two — Speaking and Listening
Giving A Talk

Phew! Now you have to do the hard part and give the talk. Don't panic — you just need to know how to present yourself.

Presenting Yourself — Cool, Calm and Collected

1) Speaking in public can be a big ordeal — especially if you get nervous. Before you give your talk, practise how you'll begin. It's the hardest part.

2) Practise speaking out loud by yourself — this will help you get used to hearing your own voice so you won't feel so nervous. Practise any difficult words in your talk so that you can pronounce them properly.

3) Best of all, practise your talk in front of a few helpful friends — but make sure they're people you trust. They'll be able to tell you if you're loud enough and if you kept them interested.

4) Don't stress out if they give some critical comments — it's better that you know if there are problems with your talk before the real thing, while you still have time to change things around.

The Real Thing — Just keep on going

1) When you give your talk remember to stay calm.

2) Keep your breathing regular and even — if you're worried you might dry up, ask if you can have a glass of water beside you.

3) Be enthusiastic and make eye contact with your audience.

4) Talk to everybody in the room, not just your friends.

5) Don't be afraid to ask the audience if they can all hear.

6) Stick to the point, and after any long sentences pause to check everyone has understood.

7) If people laugh or make a noise, wait for them to quieten down.

8) Stress any significant words and vary your tone — loud or soft, fast and slow — this makes you sound more interesting.

9) Try not to er and um — just take your time and speak slowly.

10) Keep your body language controlled and don't fidget. Speak slowly and calmly — don't look at your notes the whole time.

11) Even if something goes wrong, just keep on going. If you lose your place then just say so — take a deep breath and start again.

12) If you make a mistake, you can still get great marks if you react well and keep talking.

Taking Questions — and enjoying yourself

1) After you've finished talking, there's always a time for questions.

2) Be prepared — think about the obvious questions people might ask and work out your answers in advance. Have the relevant facts with you so that you can quote them if need be.

3) Be prepared to think on your feet, but don't just say the first thing that comes into your head.

4) If it's a tricky question ask for a moment to think — then you can answer carefully (see P.7).

5) Never make up an answer because you don't know — be honest. No-one will expect you to know everything. Be polite and thank people for their attention and for their questions.

Body language — I think my stomach is growling...

Presenting yourself means staying calm — which can be tough when you're giving a talk in front of the whole class. The secret is good preparation — feeling comfortable with what you're going to say, and making it as clear and interesting as you can. That's the only way to do it.
Asking Questions

To get top marks in the Speaking Exam, you need to make sure that when you do speak, other people listen.

A Careful Question is Better than a Speech

1) A good question is an effective way of showing that you’ve been listening, and that you have understood what the speaker is saying.
2) The secret is to contribute to the discussion or conversation in a constructive and clear way.
3) Don’t ask questions to make other people look stupid. No-one likes a smart-alec — and you’ll lose marks for distracting the class.

How to ask a Good Question

1) Make sure you ask a relevant question. If you don’t listen, you could end up asking a really stupid question that has already been answered. Listen to other people’s questions.
2) Take notes during the talk — it’ll help you to stay awake if the talk is boring. Listen out for the important stuff, and make a note of anything you don’t understand.
3) When you get the chance, ask about the things you didn’t understand. Make sure the speaker explains things clearly so that the discussion can move on.
4) Never interrupt — wait until whoever is speaking has finished. If the discussion has a chairperson, then wait until they let you speak. Remember to be polite.
5) A constructive question is one that develops the discussion — a question with a yes or no answer is not a good one. Ask for people’s opinions.
6) Avoid being negative — if you disagree with the speaker then explain why clearly.
7) If you are going to be critical then try to do it as positively as possible.

Don’t forget: Never insult people personally, even if you think their views are wrong. It’ll lose you marks — and people will start criticising you.

The Skills You’re Trying to Show — Getting the Marks

1) You’re really just showing that you’ve been listening.
2) You’re also showing that you understood what was said.
3) Make sure your question is relevant — stick to the point.
4) Your question will show how you reacted to the speaker — and whether or not you’re being constructive or just negative.
5) If you can show you understood what was said, and ask a constructive question that makes everybody else think and develops the discussion, you’ll win yourself loads of marks.
6) As always, the secret is to practise — and not to talk too much.

Questions annoy me — they’re always asking for it...

If you’re going to talk in class, you may as well pick up marks for it. That’s why you need to practice asking constructive questions. Then you’ll make it sound like you’ve been listening closely — even when you haven’t. Just remember CAP — what, who and how.

Section Two — Speaking and Listening
Having a Debate

A debate is a formal discussion with firm rules — make sure you know how the rules work and then you won’t be caught out if you have to debate a topic.

How a Debate Works

The subject to be debated is called the motion — it always takes a specific form:

This House believes/demands/condemns etc + whatever the topic is

1) The Chairperson controls the debate. They must be impartial — they can’t take sides.
2) The Chairperson reads out the motion, then takes an initial vote from the audience and records the result. The Proposer is then asked to speak.
3) During the debate the Chairperson controls who speaks when and keeps the audience quiet by calling for order. The Chairperson is the final authority while the debate is going on.
4) All speakers must begin their speeches with ‘Mr. Chairman’ or ‘Madam Chairwoman’.

Opening the Debate to the Floor

1) The Chairperson then opens the debate to the Floor, and anyone in the audience who wants to speak can put up their hand. The Chairperson can signal to them that they may speak.
2) All speakers should address the Chairperson before they speak.
3) After a few minutes of Floor debate, the Chairperson should ask the Opposer to sum up the case against the motion briefly. The Proposer should then sum up quickly too.
4) The Chairperson takes a final vote from the audience — people can vote for the motion, against it or abstain (don’t know) — if a majority supports the motion it is passed.
5) If the vote is tied then the Chairperson has a casting vote — deciding who wins.

Defending Your Corner

1) Research your case and work with the other person on your team.
2) Prepare your speech the same way you would prepare a talk.
3) Use two or three strong arguments with your best point for a conclusion.
4) You’re allowed to be one-sided here — but use facts to support your ideas.
5) Try to prove your opponents are wrong — but without being rude.
6) Be ready to answer any criticisms they make about your arguments.

Debates are like restaurants — there are lots of orders...

Debates follow some tricky procedures — make sure you know what’s going to happen.

Section Two — Speaking and Listening
Having a Discussion

Discussions are much less formal than debates — but they still have to be constructive.

Plan the Discussion Before You Begin

1) Usually you’ll be given a topic to discuss in class or in small groups. If the group has to choose its own topic then suggest something that will interest everybody, and about which there’s a lot to say.
2) Prepare a few ideas for questions (see P10) to start the discussion off. People may not have much to say.
3) You may need to choose a leader or a secretary to control who speaks when and to let everybody have their say.
4) If you are chosen then you’ll have to lead the discussion. If not, then don’t worry, you’ll still have a chance to speak.

How to Lead a Discussion

1) The leader’s job is to develop the views of the group — not to force everyone to accept their point of view.
2) Keep the discussion to the point. Don’t let people sidetrack the group into talking about irrelevant subjects.
3) Ask questions — it makes people think and provokes ideas. Don’t ask yes or no questions and avoid asking specific individuals. It’s better to ask the whole group.
4) Sometimes a few members of the group will dominate — they will want to speak all the time. Let them have their say but make sure that the other group members have a chance too.
5) If some people aren’t contributing, then invite them to say something — but don’t pressurise them. Some people just don’t want to take part. Your job is to give them the opportunity.
6) If there’s an awkward silence then you can summarise the arguments made so far. Feel free to contribute your own thoughts to the discussion, but you mustn’t talk all the time.

Taking Part in a Discussion — Stick to the Point

1) Be polite — if you disagree with someone, be friendly and give your reasons.
2) Agreeing with other people’s points is a good way of moving the discussion on.
3) When you agree with someone, try to develop their argument further — think about why their point is valid.
4) Give examples from your own experience, or from your reading, that might interest others — a story can be a tactful way of presenting a sensitive point.
5) Remember: some people are easily offended and discussions may get emotional — think before you speak.
6) Listen to what other people have to say.

Discussion time — follow the leader...

Leading a discussion is a tricky business — it looks easier than it really is. The secret is awareness — keep the discussion to the point and make sure everyone has a chance to speak.
Playing a Role

Apart from ordinary acting, any discussion or debate can also involve role-playing. The secret of all three skills is persuading other people to believe you.

Role Play is about Persuading People to Believe You

1) Roleplaying is about making people believe you — especially if you’re acting on stage.
2) If Macbeth turns to the audience and says “Did you see the football last night?” in the middle of Shakespeare’s play, we stop believing that he is Macbeth straight away.
3) Roleplaying is also about arguing a point — in a debate a speaker can play a role to exaggerate an opinion. This is a great way to involve an audience and can also be very funny (see P.11).
4) Best of all, roleplays help you to get inside other people’s characters — to pretend to be someone else. All literature is about getting inside other people’s heads and finding out what they think about and what they’re like. Roleplaying helps you develop this skill.

Using Your Imagination

1) Playing a role means using your imagination to express the emotions and reactions of others.
2) Picture the character — the setting, their clothes, personal details, emotions and attitudes — until you can imagine how they speak and behave.
3) Respond to other people in character — that means reacting in the way that the character would react: eg. if you’re playing a nervous person, you might fawn at the slightest noise.

ROLEPLAYING could come up as part of your Speaking Exam, and it’ll definitely improve your speaking skills. It’ll also help you write better about drama — you can act out scenes from plays and work out how they might appear on stage.

Let your Body do the Talking (well, some of it)

1) Your body language must fit your character.
2) Your voice and your expressions should reflect the feelings of the character.
3) If you have a script, it will give stage directions which tell you where to move and how to react.
4) If you’re improvising then make them up as you go along.
5) Respond to the actions of any other characters in the roleplay, so that your behaviour seems natural.

Don’t call us — we’ll call you

1) Whether you’re giving a talk, leading a discussion or playing the French Herald in Shakespeare’s Henry V, you are playing a role and you must focus on it.
2) Ask for feedback — there’s always room for improvement, and helpful criticism is essential.
3) Don’t just think about your role — think about the other characters in the roleplay and think about how the whole thing would look and sound to an audience or an assessor.

The theatre is a bakery — full of good roles...

Roleplaying isn’t just about the theatre — you can use it in all of your Speaking assignments. Sometimes it’s easier to speak in public if you pretend to be someone else — so learn this page.
Revision Summary for Section Two

Your Speaking practicals don’t have to be a terrible ordeal — as long as you’re prepared for what you’ll have to do. You’re trying to persuade people — to listen to you and to believe you. Look at P.81 on Rhetoric to give you some ideas on how to use language to persuade you. You should also look back at P.2 on standard English — don’t forget to avoid using any dialect words or slang when you speak in class. People only become good at public speaking through practice, and that takes time. Just learn to prepare properly and practise speaking out loud on your own. Look at these questions to remind yourself of the key points in this Section — make sure you’ve learned them all carefully.

1) What three things do you have to think about before you start any Speaking practical?
2) What is standard English? Are dialect words part of standard English?
3) Is your accent important when you speak?
4) Why do you need to use standard English when you speak in class?
5) Why should you avoid double negatives when you speak?
6) In conversations and discussions, what should you do if you don’t understand what someone has said?
7) What should you do if you don’t agree with what someone has said? What should you never do when you criticise someone else’s remarks?
8) What is the secret to giving an interesting and successful talk?
9) Should your notes give every word of your talk?
10) Should you look at your notes while you give your talk?
11) Give five things you can do to present yourself well when you speak.
12) How would you prepare for taking questions after your talk?
13) What should your questions do in a discussion?
14) What are the six secrets of asking good questions?
15) What does the chairperson do in a debate?
16) What does the Proposer do?
17) What does the Opposer do?
18) What do the seconders do? When do they speak?
19) How should you address the chairperson in a debate?
20) When can people in the audience start contributing to a debate?
21) What should the leader of a discussion do if people aren’t joining in?
22) What should they do if there’s an awkward silence?
23) How would you prepare for a role play?
24) Why is it important to stay in character?
25) How can you practise your public speaking skills? Why should you practise?

Section Two — Speaking and Listening
Making Grammar Easy

Let's face it, grammar is boring. The trouble is, you can lose loads of marks if you can't spell and if you make silly grammatical mistakes.

This Section is about Picking up the Easy Marks

1) We already know most of the rules of grammar instinctively — we use them whenever we speak or write, but perhaps no-one has ever explained them in grammatical terms.

2) Grammar is just the group of rules that help us to use words correctly in a language. Syntax is about putting words together in sentences.

3) You only need to know the key rules of grammar and punctuation to help you avoid mistakes that could lose you marks in your work.

4) It'll help you write more precisely, more clearly and more accurately — and that will win you extra marks. You will also start to recognise the ways in which authors use language for effect.

The secret of grammar is making sure you know how different words work — what their function is in a sentence and how you choose the right form to use.

The Verb is used to describe an Action

1) The verb tells us what is happening and when. It is the 'DOING' word of a sentence.

2) Verbs change their form and are sometimes formed using the auxiliary verbs 'to have', 'to be', 'will' and 'shall', according to when the action is taking place. These changed verb forms are called tenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Tense</th>
<th>Past Tense</th>
<th>Future Tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I go to town</td>
<td>I went to town</td>
<td>I shall go to town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action is happening now</td>
<td>The action has already happened</td>
<td>The action hasn't happened yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Read through and then scribble your own copy of this table of tenses using a different verb:

Grammar is about rules — so's Granpa...

There are thirty rules in this Section on grammar, spelling and punctuation. That sounds like a lot, but if you can learn one every day, that'll take thirty days — which is a month. So in one month you can definitely improve your written work — that means fewer mistakes and more marks.
To Be (or not To Be)

The verb *to be* is the most important verb in English and it's really very easy to use, as long as you avoid making a few obvious mistakes.

Learn the Simple Present and Past forms of 'to be'

You use this verb all the time, so if you're writing these forms wrongly you must be saying them wrongly. Make sure you know the basic forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present:</th>
<th>Past:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am</td>
<td>I was</td>
<td>I, You, He/She/It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are</td>
<td>You were</td>
<td>= singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/She/It is</td>
<td>He/She/It was</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are</td>
<td>We were</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are</td>
<td>You were</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are</td>
<td>They were</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: The word 'you' has a singular and a plural form — it can mean one person or a whole group.

When to use Were and when to use Was

People often say 'I were' instead of 'I was', or 'we was' instead of 'we were'. These forms are not correct in formal English. Anyone who uses them in an essay or an Exam will automatically lose marks. The rule is simple:

**RULE 1:** you must use were with all plural forms and always with you — singular and plural. Only I, he, she and it take was.

There is one exception to this rule. In phrases with 'if', you can use were with I, he, she or it.

eg If I were you... If only she were a better singer...

Remember this is only in the one special case.

Don't confuse were with we're — were is part of the verb to be, but we're is the short form of we are (see page 28).

A Terrible Mistake — 'Been' and 'Being'

These are two words that sound very similar and can easily be confused. Fortunately there's a very practical way of telling them apart:

**RULE 2:** you can only use been with have, has or had in front of it. Being must have another part of the verb to be — is, am, are, was, or were.

eg I had been to the shops — the action happened in the past and was completed.
I have been unwell — the action was in the recent past and may still be going on.
I am being followed — the action is happening right now.
I was being chased — the action was still going on at the moment described.

The boring technical explanation for this rule is that being is the present participle, been is the past participle — but you don't need to learn that. Just learn the rule and don't confuse the two forms.

Don't forget — 'been' and 'being' are used to help form some tenses of other verbs:

eg I have been eating dog food.
Heathcliff had been gone for years.
He is being watched.

Stop being daft!

I always have been.

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
Mistakes with the Verb ‘Have’

The verb ‘to be’ and the verb ‘to have’ are auxiliary verbs — this means they combine with other verbs to form different tenses (eg. I was shopping, he has crashed).

A Multi-talented Verb — ‘to have’

1) The verb ‘to have’ is used to mean possessing something, as well as to form several tenses.
2) The present tense of ‘to have’ (have, has) is added to a verb to form a past tense where the action was quite recent — I have bought a new jacket (see verb table on P.15).
3) The past tense of ‘to have’ (had) is added to a verb to form the pluperfect — I had eaten.

You must say ‘I did’ or ‘I have done’ — never ‘I done’

1) There are two confusing ways to talk about actions you completed in the past:

   You can use ‘I did’ or ‘I have done’

   ‘I did’ emphasises that the action was a single past event.

   ‘I have done’ suggests that the action was more recent in the past.

2) Don’t confuse the two — you’ll lose lots of valuable marks:

Some people say ‘I done’ — this is wrong

3) Remember — ‘done’ isn’t a verb form on its own; it’s only part of a verb. Learn the forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I did</th>
<th>I have done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You did</td>
<td>You have done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/She/It did</td>
<td>He/She/It has done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We did</td>
<td>We have done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (plural) did</td>
<td>You (plural) have done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We did</td>
<td>They have done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) To avoid this mistake, make sure you learn the simple rule:

RULE 3: ‘has’, ‘have’ or ‘had’ must always go before ‘done’ in the past tenses. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule, so learn it and don’t forget it.

eg. She did the only thing she could. Katy has done her best.

The Short Form of Could Have is Could’ve

1) The words could, should, would, and might are used with the verb form ‘have + verb’, to say that something might have been possible in the past — each has a different shade of meaning:

   eg. I could have escaped to Florida if the RAF hadn’t forced me to land the 747.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts of Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Many people say ‘could of’ instead of ‘could have’. This is totally wrong. The ‘have’ is part of the verb form that follows (eg have escaped) — it doesn’t go with the verb ‘could’.

3) The correct short form for could have is ‘could’ve’ — but you should never use it in formal written English, only for writing dialogue. It sounds like could of but it isn’t — remember:

RULE 4: could’ve is short for could have because have is part of the verb that follows — the same goes for might’ve, would’ve and should’ve.

4) The word ‘of’ is not part of a verb, so never use it that way — see P.23.

5) For the differences between could, should, would, might etc, see next page.

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
**Being able to: Shall/Will; Should/Would**

Can, may, might, shall, will, could, would and should are confusing so study this page carefully.

**Can means ‘being capable of doing’**

1) The word can is used in the present tense to mean being able to do something — the action is something which will be possible: eg When I leave school I can travel.

2) It also means a physical ability:
   eg I can touch my toes. In Mexico the beans can jump.

3) The opposite of can is cannot, which has the short form can’t. In your essays you must only use ‘cannot’.

4) In the past tense, can becomes could — although could is also used as a polite form in asking other people questions:
   eg Could you pass me the salt please?

5) The phrase ‘could + have done’ is used to talk about an action that was possible in the past (see P17).

6) The opposite of could is could not, or couldn’t: eg He couldn’t finish his lunch yesterday.

---

**May is used for Possibility and Permission**

1) The word may is used for asking permission: eg May I leave the room, please?

2) Lots of people use ‘can’ here but it is wrong — ‘Can I leave the room?’ means ‘Am I capable of leaving the room?’ Don’t make this mistake.

3) May is also used to say something is possible — but only if it is likely to happen:
   eg I may be going to see United at the weekend.

---

**Might is used for Possibilities that are Less Likely**

Might is used with possibilities, but only when something is unlikely to happen:
eg Next year I might be discovered and asked to star in an Hollywood film with Arnie.

---

**Shall and Will are “Used” to Form the Future Tense**

1) Shall and will are auxiliary verbs. Shall is used with ‘I’ and ‘we’; will is used with you, he, she, it and they:
   eg I shall go sailing. You will be leaving soon.

2) If you want to stress a point, you can use will with ‘I’ and ‘we’, and shall with you, she, he, it and they:
   eg I will go sailing. You shall go to the ball.

3) Many people don’t use these forms this way — you probably won’t lose marks if you don’t. Will is also used as a noun.

---

**Should and Would are Past Tense Forms**

1) Should is the past tense form of ‘shall’, and is used to show when something is a necessary task (a duty) or when something is very likely: eg You should apologise. They should be home soon.

2) Would is the past tense and conditional tense of the verb ‘will’. It is used in the past tense to talk about something in the future: eg He said he would go = past of ‘he says he will go.’

   It is also used to show willingness: eg I would like to come. Would you like a drink?

   It can also show a habit: eg He always would complain about the weather.

3) Don’t confuse would and should — remember the rule:

   **RULE 5:** only use should when it’s necessary or likely; would has lots of uses.

---

**Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation**
Nouns and Pronouns

We only need to go over nouns and pronouns quickly, so that you can avoid the big mistakes.

**Nouns are for Naming People and Things**

1) Any word that names an animal, person, place or thing in a sentence is a **noun**.

2) **Nouns** can be used in two ways:

   - The **subject** of a sentence is the person or thing that does or is something.
   - The **object** of a sentence is the person or thing that has something done to it.

   *eg.* The sheriff arrested Juan.

   **subject**  |  **object**

3) The names of **people, organisations** or particular **places** are called **proper nouns** — remember to write them with a **capital letter**:

   *eg.* Miles Davis, Newcastle United, Scotland.

**Pronouns Replace Nouns to Avoid Repetition**

1) Pronouns are words like *he, she* or *it*, used to avoid repeating the noun over and over. This is because it sounds clumsy to **repeat** the noun, especially a long word or a proper name.

   *eg.* Juan robbed the bank. Juan hid the money in the desert. The sheriff came to look for Juan.

2) In the second sentence, the noun Juan is the **subject** so it can be replaced by the pronoun *he*.

3) In the third sentence, the noun Juan is the **object** so it can be replaced by the pronoun *him*.

Here is a list of some basic pronoun forms — don’t get them confused:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>she</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>him</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RULE 6:** when the noun is a subject, use a subject pronoun; when it's an object, use an object pronoun. When nouns stand for things, they take it or they.

*eg.* They smiled at us more than we smiled at them. She likes him and he likes her.

**When to use You and I and when to use You and Me**

1) This is one people always get muddled up — but it’s very **easy** if you know your pronoun table.

   Use ‘you and I’ when both words are the subject of the sentence.

   *eg.* You and I need to have a word.

   Use ‘you and me’ when both words are the object of the sentence.

   *eg.* Dave came to look for you and me.

2) Many people say ‘Dave came to look for you and I’, which is **incorrect**. Learn the rule:

   **RULE 7:** when you have a choice between you and I and you and me, write the sentence out twice — once using only the word I and once using only the word me. Only one form will make sense — I must **always** be a subject.

3) After all **prepositions** (see P.22) you must always use ‘me’:

   *eg.* between you and me.

4) This is true for all pronouns that have different subject and object forms (her, us, them etc):

   *eg.* The lead singer and he are very alike. Sandy came after you and her in the queue.

**SECTION THREE — GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION**
Describing and Comparing

Adjectives and adverbs are just descriptive words — adjectives describe nouns, while adverbs describe verbs and adjectives. The problem here comes when you try to compare things.

Use Adjectives to Describe Nouns

1) Adjectives describe nouns or pronouns. They give you more information about the noun, and help to make a piece of writing clearer and more vivid.
   eg 'There was a big, grey horse', is a much clearer image than just saying 'There was a horse'.

2) Most adjectives come before the noun they describe.
   eg Anne has a broken ankle.
   The vicious dragon attacked them.
   This ship is too small.
   That officer has been brutal.

3) When an adjective is used with the verb 'to be', it can be separated from the noun.
   eg The court martial, mission impossible, etc.

4) In certain set phrases, adjectives follow the noun instead.
   eg '...impossible...'

Adverbs Describe Verbs and Adjectives

1) Adverbs describe how an action was performed:
   eg She danced energetically. He ate quickly.

2) They also describe adjectives — eg happily married.

3) Most adverbs end in the letters -ly. Be careful though:
   some adjectives also end in -ly:
   eg lovely, lively, friendly.

4) Look at the example on the right:
   A truly witty man can tell an expertly timed joke, without being really rude to anyone.

Comparisons — using more and most or -er and -est

1) When you want to compare things, use more + adjective/adverb + than.
   eg He is more charming than his friend. She danced more energetically with Paul than with you.

OR you can add -er + than to the end of short, everyday words.
   eg Robert is a lot taller than Andrew. This question is harder than the last one.

2) There isn't a precise rule for when you should use -er, but generally you should use it with short words that have only one syllable. Watch out for irregular forms — see next page.

3) The word than is used to introduce the second thing you are comparing. Sometimes it is left out — this is because it is taken as understood already. Don't do this in your written work.
   eg My debt is now a lot smaller. She seems happier.

4) Make sure you learn the rule for comparatives:

RULE 8: Never use more and -er together when you compare things. Use -er with shorter words and some special cases. Otherwise use more + adjective/adverb. Always use than to introduce the second thing you are comparing.

5) When you want to say something is the best, or highest quality, use most in front of the adjective, or -est at the end of the short adjective — these are called superlative forms:
   eg It is the richest country in the World. Of all the volunteers, he is the most willing to help.

6) The superlative form does not use 'than'. It is only used to compare three or more things.

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
How to Use Descriptive Words

Time to make sure that you’re clear on those **comparatives** and **superlatives** — learn the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative adj./adv.</th>
<th>Superlative adj./adv.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good (adjective)</td>
<td>better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well (adverb)</td>
<td>best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad (adjective)</td>
<td>worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badly (adverb)</td>
<td>worst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much (adj./adv.)</td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>few* (adjective)</td>
<td>least</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Fewer and fewest also exist. The adverbial equivalent of few is little.

The Two Key Rules for Using Adjectives and Adverbs

Using adjectives and adverbs will help you develop a **good written style** — they make your work more **interesting** and **precise** for the Examiner. There are two important rules for using them:

1) When you use words like **beautiful**, **lovely** and **wonderful**, you must explain **why** you have used them. Without explanation they are meaningless.

   It’s not specific enough to say 'This poem is beautiful'. You must **explain why** it is beautiful:

   eg. "Anyone lived in a pretty how town" by E.E. Cummings, is a poem about time passing in a small town. It is beautiful because the rhythm of the words is like a chiming church bell.

   Avoid words that you can’t explain — the Examiner will just think that you are **confused**.

2) Avoid **technical-sounding** words like **realistic**, **important**, **poetic** or **stylish**, unless you can explain **why** you’re using them. This is a very common mistake.

People often write things like, 'Wuthering Heights is a very poetic novel'. This means **nothing** unless you can explain **why** it is poetic:

   eg. ...because it creates images of the passions of love and despair in the face of the great power of nature, in a similar way to many Romantic poems from the early 19th century.

   If you can use your **adjectives** and **adverbs** to link into specific examples, you will start to write clear, stylish essays — which means the Examiner will enjoy them and give you more marks.

Improving Your Style — Vocab and Practice

1) Writing well means using words **accurately** and being **clear**.
2) Improving your written work should include learning **new** words — as many as you can. You must learn the **meaning** and the **spelling** of any new words carefully.
3) Whenever you’re **reading** and you find a word you don’t know, **write it down** and **look it up** in a dictionary. Practise spelling it and start trying to use it — but make sure you use it **correctly**.
4) **Don’t** use words if you’re not sure what they **mean**: you will **lose marks** if you use words inaccurately in your work.
5) If you’re in doubt about a word, find the **clearest** way of saying **what you mean**. There’s an **easy** way to say everything.
6) If you use a **difficult** or a **technical** word, you should explain **what it means** in **brackets** (see P.30 on the use of brackets).
Joining Words and Relationship Words

There are two more types of word you need to know about — they are both forms of linking word, and their job is to connect the different parts of a sentence.

Conjunctions are the basic joining words

1) These are words like and or but which join words or phrases in a sentence. They are used to form longer sentences:
   eg The army tried to advance, but after a few yards the horses and cannon became stuck in the mud.

2) Common conjunctions are:
   and, but, although, as soon as, because, either, or, that, though, which, who, etc.

3) Be very careful when you use conjunctions, especially at the start of a sentence.

Never begin a sentence with the words and or but

This is something that will lose you easy marks in your Exam work — so avoid this mistake.

1) Never begin a sentence with and or but — just don’t do it.

This is easy if you think about it: a conjunction joins two words or phrases, but there’s nothing to join a word with at the beginning of a sentence — so you can’t possibly use and or but.

2) Sometimes you may read sentences beginning with because or although with a main clause following them — these sentences are used for emphasis, but don’t do it in your written work. You will lose marks if you do.

a) Here the order of the main clause and the dependent clause have been changed for emphasis:

   Although he is good, he doesn’t train hard enough. Because I am a Martian, I am green.

   is an emphatic version of

   He doesn’t train hard enough although he is good. I am green because I am a Martian.

   MAIN CLAUSE       DEPENDENT CLAUSE

   MAIN CLAUSE       DEPENDENT CLAUSE

   I was caught on camera at the bank with the money

   RULE 9: never use but, and or because to begin a sentence in written work.

b) It’s called the dependent clause because it depends on the main clause.

Prepositions — Words that show Relationships

1) Prepositions are words that show the relation of a noun or pronoun to another word. This means that they show where things are in relation to each other:
   eg on, at, near, with, onto, to, of.

2) Most prepositions have different meanings in different situations — but don’t worry, you only need to know how to avoid the most common mistakes with prepositions (see next page).

3) Don’t forget — if a preposition is followed by a pronoun, it will always be an object pronoun (see p.19).
Mistakes with ‘of’, ‘from’ and ‘to’

Three very annoying little mistakes to avoid here — make sure you learn how to spot the traps.

**Two tricky little words — don’t confuse of/off**

1) Off gives the idea of being away from something — going away, coming away or being taken away from something. eg A price can have twenty percent off.

2) It’s also used in some specific phrases: eg Come off it! The plane took off. The milk was off.

3) Of is a linking word in a sentence — a preposition — meaning various things, including possession, origin, cause and about:

   eg A friend of mine. The works of Shakespeare. He died of shame. Let’s talk of other things.

**REMEMBER:** off is about being away and has two ‘ff’s — of is a preposition. Think what you are trying to say before you use either one in a sentence.

**You must use ‘different from’ — don’t use ‘different to’**

1) Another really irritating error which loses you marks — many people use ‘different than’ or ‘different to’ in their written work. This is incorrect. The only correct form is ‘different from’.

2) This makes sense if you learn the rule:

   Different means ‘not the same’ — meaning separate from the thing described.

   eg Jane is very different from Rochester. Holden thinks he is different from other teenagers.

3) ‘Different to’ is wrong because ‘to’ means ‘going towards’ — which is the complete opposite of the idea of ‘separation from’. ‘Different’ and ‘to’ contradict each other.

4) ‘Different than’ is an American form, and that means it is wrong to use it in your written work.

**Two/to/too — they Don’t Mean the Same thing**

1) These three words are easily confused because they all sound the same — be very careful.

2) Two is a number — just think of the word twice: eg There were two ravens.

3) Too means also — remember that you need to add an ‘o’ for also: eg I ate too much.

4) To is a preposition meaning towards, or part of a verb: eg I went to town. You went to eat.

**RULE 10:** to means to-wards or is part of a verb; too adds an ‘o’ to mean ‘also’; two is a number — so think twice.

‘To Try To’ — a Phrase to Remember

1) The verb ‘to try’ is used with the infinitive form of other verbs: eg to do, to eat, to see.

2) It is never used in the phrase ‘to try and’. This is completely wrong and will lose marks.

3) You must always use the form ‘to try to’: eg She decided to try to become a star.

A Short Note on Separation

Separation is a word that people often spell incorrectly — eg separation. In fact it’s very easy to ensure you get it right every time, if you learn the rule:

**RULE 11:** Separation means apart, so spell it with par.
Avoiding Common Spelling Mistakes

You’ll really lose marks for bad spelling in the Exam — so learn these simple rules.

The Top Two Spelling Rules for the letter ‘e’

1) Use ‘i’ before ‘e’ except after ‘q’ — but just when it rhymes with ‘bee’.
   When you try to spell a word with an ‘e’, say it in your head and think about whether the ‘ie’ part sounds like ‘bee’. This is the easy way to make sure you spell these words correctly.
   
   Eg believe → the ‘ie’ sounds like bee  
   thief → the ‘ie’ sounds like bee  
   achieve → the ‘ie’ sounds like bee

   But: leisure → ‘ei’ doesn’t sound like bee  
   weight → ‘ei’ doesn’t sound like bee  
   receive → use ‘ei’ because of the ‘c’

   There are a few key exceptions to this rule:
   Weird, weir and seize sound like bee but use ‘ei’.
   Science has an ‘ie’ that does follow a ‘c’.
   People’s names don’t follow the rules: eg Keith.

   Important note: remember to learn the correct spellings for ‘neither’ and ‘either’, because they can be pronounced in two different ways (to rhyme with bee or to rhyme with eye).

   Another useful rule for the letter ‘e’ is when it comes at the end of a word:
   2) Chop off the ‘e’ at the end of a word when you add -ing, except when there’s a double ‘-e’ where you just add -ing.

   Eg dance → dancing  
   wake → waking  
   but  
   flee → fleeing  
   see → seeing

Changing the forms of words ending in ‘-y’

1) Lots of words end in ‘y’, whether nouns like ‘day’, verbs like ‘hurry’ or adjectives like ‘happy’.
2) There are two rules for changing the forms of these words:

   RULE 12: If the letter before the -y is a vowel — a, e, i, o, u — the -y remains.
   Eg buy → buyer  
   key → keys  
   day → days  
   obey → obeys

   RULE 13: If the letter before the -y is a consonant, the -y is replaced by an -i.
   Eg hurry → hurries  
   easy → easier  
   daisy → daisies  
   happy → happiest

   Don’t forget — these examples are all sorts of different word forms. The word ‘daisy’ is a noun; ‘happy’ is an adjective; ‘hurries’ is a verb. The only thing you need to learn here is the spelling rule — when to change the -y at the end of a word to an -i, and when to leave it alone.

Let’s take a break — it’s time for a recap...

Lots of rules to remember here — time to go over a few of the key points. Start by looking at verb forms, especially when they involve the auxiliary verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to have’. You must always remember to use ‘could have’, never ‘could of’.

The tricky part about nouns and pronouns is knowing the difference between subjects and objects. Look through p.19 again if you’re not sure. Think carefully about what you mean to say when you’re using adjectives — don’t forget your comparatives. Prepositions are pretty easy to use, the problems come when you get simple words muddled up.

Phew! I know it looks like a lot, but you’ll be fine if you know the key rules. Go over the first half of this Section now, and write down all the rules. Then spend some time learning them.

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
More Spelling Tips

A varied vocabulary will definitely improve your Essay-writing, but if you spell words wrongly over and over, then you can guarantee that the Examiner will take marks away from your work.

Watch out for these Four Silly Spelling Mistakes

1) Words that have a ‘y’ in the middle, especially ‘rhythm’ and ‘rhyme’.
2) Words with a silent ‘h’ — you don’t say it, but you must write it: eg chemistry.
3) Words written with ‘ph’ and pronounced with an ‘f’: eg graph or philosophy.
4) Never end any word with ‘-ley’ except if it is a place name: eg Headingley.

Words that Sound the Same but have Several Spellings

The words below are regularly confused in written work. Make sure that you know how to use them correctly.

1) affect/effect

1) Affect is a verb meaning to act on or influence something.
2) Effect is a noun — it is the result of an action.
3) Effect can also be used as a verb meaning to achieve.

eg Global warming is affecting Earth's climate. The effect of global warming is climate change.

He affected his escape through a secret tunnel. His escape didn’t affect me.

There are other meanings of affect but they are not important at this stage.

2) practise/practice

1) Practise is a verb meaning to make a habit of, to work at something or to work in a profession:
   eg He tries to practise what he preaches. I practise the piano daily. She practises medicine.
2) Practice is a noun meaning the effort of improving a skill, the usual way something is done, an action or performance or the business of a professional:
   eg I enjoy football practice. The practice of polygamy is rare nowadays.
   Practice makes perfect. Dr. Killer only has a small medical practice now.

3) where/were/wear

1) Where is used to talk about place and position: eg Where is the Frenchman?
2) Were is a past tense form of the verb ‘to be’ (see P.16): eg They were hidden behind a statue.
3) Wear is a verb used with clothes, hair, jewellery etc: eg He wears armour of burnished gold.

4) there/their/they’re

1) There is used for place and position — remember where and there go together.
2) Their shows possession — that something belongs to them.
3) They’re is the short form for ‘they are’ — see the section on apostrophes (see P.28).
   eg I went there to meet their friends. They’re very charming people.

5) stationary/stationery

1) Stationary with an ‘a’ means motionless or still. Remember; stationary means cars and vans.
2) Stationery with an ‘e’ means office equipment. Learn this; stationery means pens and pencils.
A Mark-Saving Page

Here are some common words that people often get mixed up — so learn the simple rules.

**Don’t use Them when you mean Those**

1) Sometimes people try to use the word ‘them’ as an adjective: eg. Let me see them books.
2) This is wrong: them is the object pronoun from the word they (see P.19): eg. I met them.
3) The word those must be used instead: eg. Let me see those books.

**RULE 14:** never use them together with a noun — you must always use those.

**Who is for People and Which is for Animals and Things**

Who and which are pronouns used to join two phrases together — they are very easy to use.

**RULE 15:** who is used to talk about people; which is used for animals or things.

eg. King Lear had two daughters who lied to him. Androcles met a lion which did not kill him.

Remember — the pronoun who changes to whom with prepositions:

eg. He was a general for whom soldiers would do anything. To whom am I speaking?

**As and Like follow a Strict, Simple Rule**

**RULE 16:** like is always followed by a noun or a pronoun on its own; as is followed by a noun with a verb.

eg. Othello did as Iago told him. She looks like him. He sings like an angel.

1) *Don’t forget* — you can’t use like in place of as: Othello did like Iago told him = **WRONG**.
2) Some people say ‘like’ at the end of a sentence: eg. He seemed a bit confused, like.
3) This sounds odd in formal English and you should never write it — you’ll definitely lose marks.

**When to use Lend and when to use Borrow**

1) These words are easily confused, but in fact they are opposites in meaning.
2) Lend means to give something out for a while; borrow means to take something for a time.
3) Learn the simple rule:

**RULE 17:** you lend something to a person or borrow it from them.

eg. John has lent me his new Ferrari. She has borrowed my shotgun for her wedding.

**The difference between Teach and Learn**

**RULE 18:** the verb to teach means giving out knowledge; learning means taking knowledge in. Don’t muddle the two.

**Between is always followed by ‘and’**

1) People often try to write ‘between him or her’. This is incorrect.
2) Make sure you always use ‘and’ with between:

eg. She must choose between Leo and Matt.
3) Remember that between always takes object pronouns (see P.19 and P.22):

eg. between you and me, between you and her.

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
Punctuation

Punctuation is the collection of symbols used to break up groups of words. They make words easier to read and to understand — so you need to know how to recognise them and use them in your own writing.

**Closing a Sentence — the Full Stop**

1) Full stops mark a definite pause at the end of a sentence.
2) A sentence is a group of words that makes sense on its own — it usually contains a subject and a verb.
3) A sentence asking a direct question is closed with a question mark: eg. Where are you going?
4) If the sentence tells you about a question but doesn’t ask it, then it is an indirect question and has a full stop: eg. The reader asked the rider where he was going.
5) Exclamation marks are used to emphasise sentences — to show a strong reaction or to give an order: eg. I don’t believe it! Hold your fire!

**RULE 19:** don’t use too many exclamation marks — they are only for special cases of emphasis. Never use more than one at a time.

**A Comma is a pause in the middle of a sentence**

1) Commas are used to separate words or groups of words so that the meaning is made clear: eg. In the valley below, the villages seemed very small.
   
   *Without* a comma, the sentence would say, ‘the valley below the villages’ — a different meaning.

2) In very long sentences they come before the joining word ‘and’ or ‘but’.

3) They are also used to separate items in a list — the last two items don’t have a comma but must be joined by the words ‘and’ or ‘or’:
   
   eg. I went to buy onions, mushrooms, peppers and pasta.

4) They can be used to separate additional phrases or words added to a sentence to give extra information or effect, but which aren’t essential:
   
   eg. The murderer, therefore, must be Miss Marble.
   
   I fell in love with Juliet, who is alas a Capulet, at the party last night.

**Using Semi-Colons and Colons**

**Semi-Colons link related sentences**

1) Semi-colons are halfway between full-stops and commas.
2) They link two sentences with a similar meaning and turn them into one longer sentence. The two parts either side of the semi-colon should be equally important.
   
   eg. She was trying to defuse the bomb but the control box contained three wires; she couldn’t decide whether to cut the red one, the green one or the blue one.

3) Semi-colons can also be used in writing lists — here the last two items don’t need an and or or.
   
   eg. The price includes: starter; fish course; sorbet; main course; dessert; cheese; coffee.

**RULE 20:** use a semi-colon when the two parts of a sentence are equally important; if the first part leads on to the second part you must use a colon.

**Colons divide sentences and introduce lists**

1) Colons are used to divide sentences in two when the second half explains the first half:
   
   eg. The ballroom had become very empty: most of the guests had left.

2) It allows the writer to illustrate or explain a point — to say the same thing and make it clearer.

3) Colons can also be used to introduce a list, but each part of the list must make sense by itself.

**SECTION THREE — GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION**
Apostrophes always seem to cause massive problems — so learn these rules to stay out of trouble.

Apostrophes can show Possession

1) Apostrophes are used to show possession — when a person owns something:
   eg. The Queen’s English is posh. Orwell’s vision of the future was wrong about the right things.

2) To use an apostrophe you must decide what the basic word is without one. In the examples above, the basic words are the Queen and Orwell. Then add apostrophe and ‘s’:
   eg. The Queen → The Queen’s = belonging to the Queen.
       Orwell → Orwell’s = belonging to Orwell.

3) Remember — you should only use an apostrophe after the owner’s name.
4) If the basic word already ends in ‘s’, you should add an apostrophe and another ‘s’.
   Sometimes people only add an apostrophe after the first ‘s’, but this can confuse. Try to be consistent:
   eg. James → James’s = St. James’s Park.

5) If the owner is plural and the basic word ends in ‘s’, only put an apostrophe after the ‘s’:
   eg. He stole the ladies’ hearts with his wit and charm. She was brave despite the tigers’ roars.

6) If the owner is plural and the basic word doesn’t end in ‘s’, add an apostrophe and another ‘s’:
   eg. Estella ruined men’s lives. He lifted the oxen’s yoke. (men and oxen are plurals without ‘s’)

IMPORTANT NOTE: there is no apostrophe with the possessive pronouns his, hers, ours, yours or its — so don’t use apostrophes with these words. The words its and it’s are completely different — see below.

Apostrophes can fill in for Missing Letters

1) This means that the apostrophe goes in place of the missing letters to run two words together and make a shorter form:
   He is a brave man → He’s a brave man — the apostrophe replaces the letter ‘i’.
   I do not like you → I don’t like you — the apostrophe replaces the letter ‘o’.

2) Other common forms are I’ve, I’m, you’re, they’re, she’s, who’s (who is), I’d (I had), could’ve.

3) Unusual forms include: shall not = shan’t, will not = won’t, I would = I’d, let us = let’s, of the clock = o’clock etc. A special case is the phrase ‘I would have’ which could be shortened to ‘I’d’ve’ — but don’t try to write it, even in dialogue, because it looks far too confusing.

RULE 22: apostrophes can be used to run two words together when letters are missed out — but never do this in essays. Use full forms for formal work.

Don’t ever confuse its and it’s

1) These are different word forms. You should never use ‘it’s’ in formal writing. Learn the rule:

RULE 23: it’s means it is or it has — nothing else. Its is like his, and shows something belongs — it shows possession and doesn’t have an apostrophe.

2) Learn this practice phrase: I hate the apostrophe; it’s had its day.

RULE 24: never use apostrophes to form ordinary plurals. Some people use apostrophes with plurals of numbers — eg 2’s, 3’s, 1970’s. This is correct but can be confusing. It’s safer not to use them for this at all.
Using Quotation Marks

Quotation marks or inverted commas are used when someone is speaking or to quote from a book.

Direct Speech is shown by Double Quotation Marks

1) Double quotation marks are used before and after someone speaks in a piece of writing.
2) Every time a new person speaks, you must start a new line. The first word inside the quotation mark must have a capital letter:
   eg “Don’t go,” he said. “I have to tell you something.”
   “Tell me what?” asked Jane, concerned.
3) Quotation marks are never used in play or film scripts.
4) If the speech is at the beginning of a sentence which continues afterwards, use a comma before the final quotation mark:
   eg “Don’t go,” he said.
5) If the speech comes at the end of a sentence, there must be a comma before the first quotation mark and a full stop before the final quotation mark:
   eg He said, “Please don’t go.”
6) The speech can also be split in two for effect, and must have commas before the first quotation mark and before the final quotation mark:
   eg “Please,” he said, “Don’t go.”
7) If the speech is an exclamation, you must use an exclamation mark instead of a comma. If it is a question, use a question mark:

Reported Speech Doesn’t Use Quotation Marks

1) Reported speech is when you write what someone has said in your own words — it’s also called indirect speech, because the original speaker isn’t talking to you directly.
2) Reported speech never uses quotation marks; the speech is usually introduced by the word that.
3) If the verb in the original direct speech is present tense, it must change to a past tense in reported speech. If it is past tense, it becomes pluperfect: if it is future ‘will’ becomes ‘would’.

Quotation Marks have Three Other Uses

1) You must use quotation marks when you want to quote exact words from a book in an essay.
2) Use quotation marks with titles of songs, poems, essays or articles, but not with the names of books. Book titles should be underlined, and the key words should have capital letters:
   eg "To be or not to be, that is the question;"
   "The Lady of Shallott" The Catcher in the Rye
3) They should be used with slang or technical words:
   eg The thief knew that the "pigs" had caught him.

IMPORTANT NOTE: single quotation marks can be used instead of doubles; but be consistent and careful — they can easily be confused with apostrophes. If there are two sets of quotation marks in one sentence, you must use doubles for the outside marks and singles for the inside marks.
Brackets, Hyphens and Dashes

Three final punctuation marks to revise here. Be especially careful not to confuse **dashes** and **hyphens** — they have very different jobs.

**Brackets are used to Explain and Expand**

1) Brackets are used to **include information** which is not directly part of the main sentence.
2) This means that the sentence must **still** make sense **without** the phrase in brackets — remember the rule:

**RULE 25:** brackets always come in pairs; at the beginning and the end of a phrase which explains or expands on the main sentence.

eg. They were determined to find the ship (it was full of silver).

3) If the brackets come at the **end** of the main sentence (as above) then there must be a **full stop outside** the end bracket.

4) If there is a **complete** sentence **inside** the brackets and it comes between **two other** sentences, then there should be a **full stop inside** the end bracket:

eg. He had spent years looking for the ship. (It had sunk in the area many years before.) At last his search was over.

**Don’t confuse Hyphens with Dashes**

**RULE 26:** hyphens are symbols used to join words or parts of words — dashes are used to separate one part of a sentence from another.

**Dashes can be used Singly or in Pairs**

1) Dashes look like this: — . A dash must always have a **space** before and after it.

2) **Pairs** of dashes are used in the **same way** as **brackets:** they **separate** a phrase which explains what went before, but **only** in the **middle** of a sentence:

eg. The ship suddenly struck the rocks — the lookout had fallen asleep — and it slowly began to sink.

3) **Never** use pairs of dashes at the **end** of a sentence.

4) A **single** dash can be used instead of a **colon** — this sentence is a good example.

5) It can also **link** two clauses that wouldn’t be sentences by themselves, especially in **headings** or **titles**:

eg. The internet — the future of education.

**Hyphens have Three Main Uses**

1) Hyphens are used to **join** words that are part of the **same idea** to make them **one word**, and with **numbers**: eg. gold-rimmed, up-to-date, free-for-all, duck-billed, eighty-two, twenty-one.

2) These are usually **adjective** phrases, and the separate words form part of **one main idea**: eg. "a free-swimming duck," means something different from "a free swimming duck".

3) Hyphens are also used to join **prefixes** to words. These are fixed to the **beginning** of words to **change** the **meaning**: eg. anti-drugs, re-record, de-icer, co-write.

4) Hyphens help to make words **easier to read**, and help avoid **confusing** two possible meanings:

eg. sword-dance, de-icer, fifty-odd people, he resigned but later re-signed.

**two ’d’s = hard to read**  fifty odd people means something else

**these are opposites**

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Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
Negatives

Negatives are simple to form in English, but there are two very common mistakes that you must make sure you avoid: mistakes with double negatives and mistakes with the word none.

Don't use Double Negatives

1) A negative sentence is where you want to say 'no' or 'not' — the opposite of a positive:
   eg. I like everyone in this room = positive
2) One way to make this sentence negative is using a negative form of the verb to do = do not.
3) We also need to change the word 'everyone' to the word 'anyone'.
4) Alternatively we could keep the same verb and change the word everyone to no-one.
5) The negative sentences are: I do not like anyone in this room or I like no-one in this room.
6) Some people try to give more emphasis by using more than one negative word. This is often because they confuse the two forms of the negative: eg I do not like no-one in this room.
7) In this case there are two negatives — so they cancel each other out: I do not like no-one actually means 'I do not not like anyone', which means 'I like everyone'. Learn the rule:

   RULE 27: two negative words in the same phrase will make it positive; you should only use one negative at a time.
   eg. I don't want anything or I want nothing (I don't want nothing = WRONG)
8) The set phrase 'neither...nor' is not a double negative — it is used to talk about more than one object in the sentence, not with the verb.
   eg. I haven't seen either Malcolm or MacDuff or I have seen neither Malcolm nor MacDuff.

The Word None has Three Meanings

1) None is a word that can cause problems. As a pronoun it means 'not one' or 'not any':
   eg. — Did you see any film stars? or — Have you got any trip hop CDs?
   — We saw none.
2) As an adverb, none means 'not at all':
   eg. Surprisingly, the fish were none the worse for living in a different kettle.
3) None should not be used with other negative words (see double negative rule):
   eg. He has none (He's not got none = WRONG). We saw none (We didn't see none = WRONG).

The Word Ain't is Never Used in Formal English

1) Lots of people use the word 'ain't' when they speak: eg. "She ain't got any." "I ain't been there."
2) This doesn't exist in formal English, and you will lose marks if you use it in your Exam work.
3) The standard form is 'hasn't' or 'haven't', or part of the verb 'to be', but remember that you don't use apostrophes in formal essay work. You must write 'has not' or 'have not'.
4) Don't forget the double negative rule: eg. He hasn't got none = WRONG. He has none = FINE.

The Key Words we haven't covered — 'a/'an' and 'the'

1) The words 'a' and 'the' are called articles: 'the' is the definite article, 'a' is the indefinite.

   RULE 28: the is the definite article, used for something you definitely mean;
   a is the indefinite article, used when you don't have anything specific in mind.
   eg. the car = specific car, a car = any car, not a specific one.
2) The word 'a' is used with all nouns except those beginning with the letter 'h' and all vowels —
   a, e, i, o, u. These words take 'an' instead: eg. an orange, an undertaker, an hotel.
3) Don't forget that words with 'h' take 'an' — people often get this wrong: eg. an hospital.
Sentences and Word Order

A sentence is a group of words which makes total sense on its own. The keys to writing good sentences are making sure that subject, verb and tense agree, and using the right word order.

The Subject and Verb must agree

1) This is really very easy. When the subject is singular, the verb must be singular; when the subject is plural, then so is the verb. Follow the rule:

**RULE 29:** look at what you want to say and ask who or what performed the action. This is the subject, and the verb must agree with it.

eg The sword is poisoned = singular subject and verb. These swords are poisoned = plural.

2) Things can become complicated when the subject is a group of words: eg a sack of potatoes. Just remember the rule — ask yourself whether the subject is 'sack' or 'potatoes', and make the verb agree: eg A sack of potatoes only costs five pounds.

3) If there is more than one subject, linked by the word 'and', then the verb is plural, even if both individual subject nouns are singular: eg Romeo and Juliet are happy.

4) If there is more than one verb, then remember the rule and look at the subject:

eg This new recipe looks delicious but tastes like elephant dung. (recipe is a singular subject)

Learn these Special Words with Special Agreement Rules

1) Everyone, someone, anyone, no-one, and each = SINGULAR subjects SINGULAR verbs
2) Many, both, few and several = PLURAL subjects PLURAL verbs
3) Collective nouns, such as team, class, and family = SINGULAR subjects SINGULAR verbs
4) Neither...nor... If both subjects are SINGULAR, use a SINGULAR verb
   If both subjects are PLURAL, use a PLURAL verb

Sentences also depend on Clear Word Order

1) Many sentences will change in meaning if you alter the word order.

I just told Chris that the ferret bit me (= I told Chris recently).
I told just Chris that the ferret bit me (= I told only Chris).
I told Chris just that the ferret bit me (= I told Chris only the fact that it bit me).
I told Chris that the ferret just bit me (= I told Chris that it bit me recently).

2) Think what you want to say, and whether you are really saying what you mean.

3) Verbs ending in -ing or -ed must be close to the subject they relate to:

eg I saw some snails walking in the park = I was walking
Walking in the park, I saw some snails = the snails were walking

4) Avoid sub-clauses separating subjects from their verbs — they are hard to follow:

eg Polonius, hiding behind the arras while Hamlet spoke to the Queen, held his breath.

Avoid Split Infinitives — They will Lose you Marks

1) Infinitives are made of the word 'to' + the basic form of the verb (see also P15 and P23).
2) Split infinitives arise when the 'to' and the other word are separated, often by an adverb:

eg to boldly go, to carefully look = these forms are considered incorrect and will lose marks.
3) Instead you should keep the two parts of the verb together: eg to go boldly, to look carefully.

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
**Sentences and Paragraphs**

Time for a few tips on how to put words together — you should also look at P.71 on writing skills.

**Use Sentences Carefully**

1) Sentences can be used to state facts, to ask questions, to make exclamations or to give commands. They can contain several clauses or only one.

2) Each sentence should contain one main idea — no more: eg. Let's go racing! Did you like it?

3) All new sentences should begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, exclamation mark or question mark.

**Paragraphs are Groups of Sentences**

1) A paragraph is a group of sentences about a related topic. They are used to break a piece of writing into sections, making it easier to read (see also P.71 on writing skills).

2) A paragraph is shown on the page by setting the first line in from the margin — when you write by hand, try to leave the same gap as the word 'space' would take up.

3) Paragraphs can be any length — but you should avoid very short or very long paragraphs. Don't forget the rule:

**RULE 30**: If the sentence you want to write is closely related to the last one you wrote, put it in the same paragraph. If you are talking about a different idea or topic, start a new paragraph. Make sure your paragraphs aren't too long.

**Example of Paragraphs in an Essay**

When Cordelia refuses to speak, she defies her father. Saying that she loves Lear in a long and exaggerated speech, as Goneril and Regan did, does not prove anything. Cordelia believes that genuine love cannot be measured. Even though she loves her father, she will not do what he wants. This is what real love is in *King Lear*.

In the same way, Kent is the only person present who is prepared to stand up against the King. When Lear grows angry with Cordelia, Kent is prepared to tell him he is in the wrong: "be Kent unmannerly / When Lear is mad."

By speaking out, however, Kent is being disloyal to his feudal lord. When he tells Lear that he is wrong, Kent is defying the whole system of loyalty that says the King has absolute power, and his subjects must do as they are told. Just as Cordelia defies the traditional system of family loyalty, Kent defies the traditional system of loyalty to the King.

**Remember to Watch your Tenses**

1) If you start an essay or a piece of creative writing in one tense, make sure you stay in the same tense. If you start in the past, stay in the past. Don't change tense.

2) Be careful with similar-sounding forms. Think what you want to say:

I was *eating* = I did the eating

I was *eaten* = something else ate me

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
Revision Summary for Section Three

Thirty rules for you to learn here — but they’re all directly relevant to your writing style. If you learn them, you will avoid making the basic mistakes in grammar and punctuation that lose marks in written or oral work. This will automatically improve your chances of doing well.

These rules will also help you to start noticing how other writers use language — we’ll look at this in detail in Sections Five and Six. Before that, you need to practise what you’ve learned. If you can learn all the rules, your writing will definitely be clearer to read and understand. Try to answer these questions without looking back; see how much you’ve learned. Don’t forget: if there’s something you’re still unsure about, go back through the Section and revise it again.

1) What’s wrong with saying ‘They should of called me’? What should the sentence say?
2) When do you use ‘would’ and when do you use ‘should’? Give two examples using each word.
3) Explain the difference between ‘Can I come in?’ and ‘May I come in?’
4) What is a noun and what is a pronoun?
5) What’s the difference between a subject pronoun and an object pronoun?
6) What is an adjective? What is an adverb? Give three sentences using adjectives and adverbs.
7) How would you explain what a conjunction is?
8) What’s the rule about using ‘and’ or ‘but’ at the start of a sentence?
9) What does a preposition do in a sentence?
10) What sort of pronoun must always go after a preposition?
11) ‘Different to’, ‘different than’ or ‘different from’: which is the form you should use and why?
12) Why shouldn’t you use the phrase ‘between...on...?’ What should you say instead?
13) ‘Brutus was greatly effected by the death of Portia.’ What’s wrong with this sentence?
14) Why shouldn’t you ask someone if they will borrow you their book?
15) Stationary and stationery: which goes with pens and which with cars?
16) What’s the difference between to, two and too?
17) When would you use ‘practise’ and when would you use ‘practise’? Give examples.
18) What is a dependent clause?
19) Which punctuation mark is used to link two sentences that are equally important? There are two possible answers. Give an example using one.
20) Which punctuation mark is used to link two sentences where one explains the other?
21) What’s the difference between it’s and its? Write three sentences using them.
22) What’s the problem with writing ‘Carrot’s 16p per pound’?
23) What is a double negative? Why should you avoid using them?
24) What do the subject and the verb in a sentence do?
25) Correct these sentences:
   I been to the chip van, I got two special burger’s for me and Steve.
   The van was stationery: the car just drove straight into it.
   If he’d known the film was on he could of gone and seen it.
   I done the shopping yesterday.
27) What is grammar? What is the key to learning grammar?
28) What is punctuation? Why is it important?
29) Write two sentences using question marks, and then re-write them as indirect questions. Don’t forget that indirect questions don’t have question marks.
30) Explain the difference between direct speech and reported speech. Re-write these sentences as reported speech:
   “We shall never surrender,” said the Anglo-Saxon Commander. “Let me go!” yelled Mina.

Section Three — Grammar and Punctuation
Reading for a Reason

Comprehension means looking for clues in a text to help you understand it and to help you answer questions on it. Remember — the more you practise reading, the better your marks will get.

Three Reasons why Reading is the Key to Good Marks

1) Reading carefully means that you notice things when you read — the way a character is described, or a line of poetry that sticks in your mind. Noting down these details will help you to write well about your reading in essay work and in your Exams.

2) Reading widely helps you to see links between writers and texts and to compare them — eg the different views of the future in Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four and Huxley’s Brave New World.

3) Reading helps you to spot the little tricks writers use to create a reaction in the reader. This will help you to write about their use of language. You can also start using these tricks to improve your own writing (see Section Five, P42-52).

Any Kind of Reading will Improve your Marks

1) You will have to read some specific books for your Exams and Coursework — but if you read other things too, you’ll be improving your ability to read carefully and notice things.

2) Any piece of writing can be read and studied — whether it’s a novel, a poem or a diary. When you talk about pieces of writing in this way, they are called texts.

3) You can also read newspaper or magazine articles, short stories and even some graphic novels. The best way to improve your reading is to read a variety of different types of text.

4) Anything that you enjoy reading will help you to practise the main skills in this section — the skills of comprehension, also known as practical criticism.

REMEMBER: comprehension is about how clearly you understand a piece of text — and also about whether you can read between the lines.

Learn to Read Between the Lines

1) Writers don’t always say exactly what they mean when they write.

2) Reading between the lines means learning to look for hidden meanings in a text.

3) Hidden meanings can take many forms. Characters may be lying to the reader, or joking, or even being deliberately boring.

4) Sometimes the narrator of a text may exaggerate or say something which is obviously untrue — to be funny, perhaps:

   eg It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a fortune must be in want of a wife.
   (Pride and Prejudice, Chapter I; Jane Austen)

These hidden meanings are part of the writer’s style — you need to learn how to spot them.

Reading — I thought that was in Berkshire...

We’re going to focus on practical criticism skills in this Section. This means reading in detail and summarising what you’ve read so that you can answer questions or write essays about it. These are the basics of comprehension — you’ll need them for fiction and non-fiction texts.

SECTION FOUR — COMPREHENSION
**Scanning and Close Reading**

*Comprehension* is tested in the Exam and in Coursework exercises, using short *extracts* from texts. You’ll have to recognise all the *main details* of the extract in a *limited* period of time.

### Scanning means Reading for the Main Ideas

1) Start by reading the extract through *quickly*.
2) You’re *not* trying to understand *every detail*; just the *main ideas* in the text.
3) Note down any *key points*, and *underline* any sentences and ideas you weren’t *sure* about. You can look at them again later. Don’t spend too long scanning — read it as *quickly* as you can.

For example:

If you’re reading a passage describing a room, you should scan the text for the basic details. Look for the main features of the room — some kind of general description: perhaps it has bare walls, a little, barred window and straw on the floor.

### Close Reading means Looking for the Details

1) Go over the text *in detail* before you start writing about it.
2) Read each sentence *carefully*, making sure you *understand* it. If you don’t, then read the last sentence *again* — then read the problem sentence through *slowly*, until you understand it.
3) When you’ve read the whole thing through, look at the *beginning* and the *end*. If the text is an extract from a longer text, you *won’t* have all of the argument — look *only* at what *you have*.
4) Look at any *questions* you are asked about the text. These are the things the Examiners *want you* to notice — so make sure you look out for them.
5) Then go through the text *again*, taking *clear notes* of the points which are relevant to *answering* the questions. Be careful not to miss anything.

**REMEMBER** — you’re *only* being tested on the *passage in front of you*; that’s ALL you should write about. *Don’t* add information *unless* the question asks for it.

For example:

After close reading of the text describing the room, you should be able to give a lot more detail — there is a skeleton in chains in the corner, a bed on the left and a rat asleep in the straw.

### Scanning and re-reading — getting close to a text...

Reading the text through twice seems like twice as much work — but you’ll *miss out* on a lot of detail if you don’t. If you’re asked to *compare* two texts, scan and close read *each* text by *itself* then read them one after the other to look for *similarities* and *differences*. Try a scan read and a close read of *this page* to find out the six main points — it’s the only way to practise.

**Section Four — Comprehension**
Making a Summary

A clear, accurate summary only gives the vital information from a text. Any extra, irrelevant details are left out. Summarising will seriously improve your quick reading skills — so learn how to do it.

Firstly, Work Out What is Relevant

1) You can’t summarise if you haven’t read the text carefully.
2) Start by scanning the text, then reading it closely.
3) Once you understand the whole text, go through it again slowly, working out what’s relevant, and which details can be left out.
4) Write only the number of words you’re allowed — no more.
5) See what the title is, and look for any extra information on the paper which could be relevant, like the author’s name.
6) Decide what the main theme of the text is.

Make Sure Your Summary is the Right Length

1) If the question says how many words long the summary must be, you must never write more than that limit. You will definitely lose marks if you don’t follow the guidelines.
2) Make sure that all the basic information is there — don’t include detail when there isn’t room.

Look at the example article below, and the 50 word summary which follows it:

Always Bank on a Toad — Pet Ends Hostage Crisis

Animal-loving hero Dave Roe, 47, and his brave pet toad Miguel, 3, were this evening recovering at home after being held hostage at gunpoint during a dramatic hour-long ordeal at the East Road Branch of the Renton Hill Bank. Mr. Roe was signing a form when three masked men with shotguns entered the Bank and demanded one thousand pounds in cash.

“The cashier was too scared to move,” said Mr. Roe, during an exclusive interview with our correspondent. “One bloke threatened her. His mate put a gun to my head. He said he’d shoot if they didn’t get the money. Just my luck! I only went in to borrow a fiver.”

Assistant Manager Bryan Pickets quickly handed over the cash, and the criminals made their escape, taking the terrified but defiant Mr. Roe as a hostage. The desperate gang escaped with the loot in a green sports car waiting outside, driven by another masked scoundrel.

The crooks hadn’t counted on Amazonian Attack Toad, Miguel, however. Arriving at the thieves’ hideout, Miguel leapt from the hole in owner Roe’s pocket, breaking the wrist of one cowardly robber. As the surprised villain dropped his gun, Miguel cornered the other two with his poisonous tongue. The plucky toad kept all three would-be bandits from escaping until police arrived. “It just shows you should always keep a toad in the hole,” Mr. Roe said.

The Renton Hill Bank on East Road was robbed at gunpoint today by three masked men and an accomplice in a green sports car. They escaped with one thousand pounds cash and a hostage, customer Dave Roe, but were later arrested after Mr. Roe’s pet toad Miguel had disarmed them.

Accurate information is rewarded — summary justice...

Remember, writing a summary means keeping the important points and nothing else. You won’t be able to write an accurate summary if you haven’t read the text through properly first.
How To Take Notes

Taking notes when you read is the easiest way to summarize — it’s a key comprehension skill.

**Be Clear and Concise — Don’t Just Repeat Everything**

1) Taking notes is the **first step** to sorting through a text. You’re looking for **key information** — nothing else. Any other information in the text may be **misleading** at this stage.

2) Notes **don’t** have to be full sentences — they can just be **key words** or **abbreviations**. It doesn’t matter if other people can’t read them; just make sure **you** can understand them.

**An Example of Note-Taking:**

Plymouth-based divers have spent the last three months searching for the legendary lost treasure of the Guadeloupe. This Spanish Galleon disappeared in 1804, when she is believed to have sunk with the loss of all hands. At the time it was rumoured that the ship was carrying silver plate from Mexico, but no trace of the wreck or the treasure has ever been found.

Earlier this year, however, a Princeton University Historian claimed to have discovered the site of the wreck. After preliminary dives by a local expert, the presence of several mysterious objects on the sea-bed was confirmed. Unfortunately, bad weather prevented further exploration for a whole frustrating month.

Since then, the area has been full of divers, but no-one found any sign of either the wreck or the treasure until yesterday, when a diver claimed to have discovered the strange objects again. They were carefully raised, only to be identified as beer barrels. It is believed that there are approximately 45 barrels, but it is unclear how they ended up in at the bottom of the sea. The salvage team now has plans to record a single for charity. The song: “Roll out the Barrel”.

Brief notes only include the key words — you can expand your notes later if you need to:

Treasure Hunt, shipwreck — Guadeloupe 1804, rumour of lost silver, historian claimed to find site, divers searched, objects seen, three months later objects found to be 45-odd beer barrels.

**REMEMBER:** you write notes to help you understand the text; not instead of the text. If you’re in doubt, or you left something out, always go back to the text.

1) If you’re asked about something that **doesn’t** appear in your notes, go back to the **text** again.

2) Your notes are there to help you find information **quickly**; they **don’t** have to be perfect, but you’ll find it easier to answer questions quickly if your notes are as **accurate** as possible.

**Draft Your Notes into a Rough Copy**

1) In a **comprehension** exercise you’ll be given questions to answer or an essay to write, based on the text. To pick up **high marks**, your final answer must be **clear** and **organised**.

2) A rough copy is a **rough version** of your **answer**, using the information in your notes. This **doesn’t** have to be **neat** or totally **accurate**. It should be a **practice** version of your final answer.

3) When you have a rough copy, go **back over** the text and see if you have **missed out** any information relevant to the question, or **added** anything **irrelevant**.

4) Then check your **grammar** and your **sentences**. Make sure your final version is in **clear, accurate, neatly-written, standard** English.

5) **Don’t** spend too long on notes or rough copies. Use them to **improve** your **final version** — this will improve the **mark** you get for the exercise. It’s like a make-over — before and after.

**Section Four — Comprehension**
Putting Comprehension Skills Together

Learn how to recognise the different styles of questions you may be given, and the kind of answers the Examiners will be looking for.

Start by Scanning the Passage

1) Scan the passage quickly for the overall meaning. If something is confusing, go over it until it becomes clear.
2) REMEMBER — you are only looking for a rough picture.

Read the Passage Closely to Understand the Detail

1) Close reading is about detail — but only relevant detail.
2) As you read the text closely, underline key words and phrases, and take notes of the main points in the piece.
3) Go back over the text to check you haven’t missed anything.
4) Look out for hidden meanings: whether the writer is saying what they mean, whether the writer is talking in the voice of a character or a biased observer (see R43).

Answer only the questions you’re asked; give the exact answer required for each.

Different Kinds of Question Require Different Answers

The circus suddenly exploded into life in front of Jane. Everywhere she saw bright, whirling lights and flashing colours. She shivered in excitement.

Jane and her aunt paused in front of the ticket kiosk. Aunt Matilda patted her coat pockets absently as she tried to find the tickets. Her arthritis made simple tasks so difficult now.

“Now, what did I do with those tickets?” Aunt Matilda saw Jane’s worried look.

“Don’t worry, dear,” she said. “I’ll soon find them and then we’ll be in. Just you wait! When I was your age, I used to love the circus — especially the clowns! Now where are those tickets?”

1) LITERAL QUESTIONS — ask you to find out information plainly written in the text:
   eg. Which parts of the passage suggest to you that Aunt Matilda is old?
   1) Decide what the question is asking you, then look through the text to find any relevant parts.
   2) Check again to ensure you haven’t missed anything; eg. She has arthritis, she can’t remember where she put the tickets, she talks about what she used to do when she was young.
   3) Write a rough answer to the question; check it and write a neat final copy.

2) CLOSE READING QUESTIONS — ask you to look closely at the text to give opinions:
   eg. What sort of character do you think Aunt Matilda has? Use the information in the passage.
   1) Work out exactly what the question is asking you. Look for hidden meanings in the text.
   2) Go through the text looking for relevant information; eg. She is absent-minded because she can’t find the tickets, she is kind and observant because she notices Jane is worried.
   3) Take notes and write a rough answer to the question, putting your best point first. If you quote from the text, remember the rules (R29). Check your grammar and write a final neat copy.
   4) NEVER make up information or add anything that doesn’t appear in the text given to you.

3) PERSONAL QUESTIONS — ask you to write about your own ideas or experiences:
   eg. What do you think of circuses? Give reasons for and against them.
Answering the Question

The secret to good marks in comprehension exercises is to make sure you answer the question. That means looking carefully at what it means and how many marks it is worth.

Answer Only the Questions You Have Been Asked

1) It sounds obvious, but many people don’t read the questions properly. Take your time to work out exactly what is asked.
2) Ask yourself what kind of question it is: a literal question, or a close reading question or a personal writing question.
   eg. — How does John change by the end of the story from what he is like at the beginning? = CLOSE READING QUESTION.
   — “People are not only educated in the classroom.” To what extent is this statement true? = PERSONAL QUESTION.

REMEMBER: you’re being examined on how carefully you read the questions as well as how carefully you read the text. Read the questions through first.

Give Only Enough Detail to Pick Up All the Marks

1) Every question should have a number beside it, showing how many marks the question is worth.
2) This tells you how detailed your answer has to be, and how much time to give it in an Exam.
3) If a question is worth twenty marks, you’ll need to give a lot of detail for the marks.
4) If a question is worth five marks, then don’t waste time giving extra information. Even if you write the greatest answer ever, you won’t get any more than five marks for it!

Look at the Example:

Harry Flash clung desperately to the monkey-puzzle tree. He didn’t dare look, but he could feel the hot breath of the lion’s mouth against his ankles. The lion roared, and Harry wondered uneasily how safe he was in the tree. His water bottle still hung over one arm, and the bag of mint humbugs his mother had sent from England hung over the other. His gun lay by the lion.

**QUESTION:** Where was Harry Flash and why? (2)

**Answer 1:** Harry Flash was trapped in a monkey-puzzle tree.
His gun was beside the lion which had chased him into the tree, and he was worried in case the lion could climb trees. He’d had better Christmas Days.

**Answer 2:** Harry Flash was clinging to a tree, with a bag of mint humbugs and a bottle of water. His gun was beside the lion which had chased him into the tree, and he was worried in case the lion could climb trees. He’d had better Christmas Days.

1) The first answer is better because it answers the question in detail, and only gives the relevant facts. The question is worth two marks, and the answer makes two points — where Harry is and why he is there. The answer only uses information from the text.
2) The second answer gives lots of irrelevant information. It starts off well, by saying where Harry Flash is, but then talks about what he is holding, which is not asked for in the question. This answer also adds information which isn’t in the text — never do this in your work.

Answer the question you’re given — simple enough...

You must read the question properly. You’ll win marks for picking out bits of the text that are relevant to the question and for using them in your answer. If you’ve read the question wrongly then you’ll be looking for the wrong things in the text — that isn’t going to get you the marks. If your notes haven’t got the information you need, then look at the text again. Keep practising.
Revision Summary for Section Four

Comprehension is the set of basic skills used for reading any text, whether it’s fiction, journalism or poetry. Your school may call it practical criticism, but the idea is the same. It’s about how you look at a text to find out what it says on the surface, and what may be hidden underneath.

Remember also that some comprehension questions in the Exam will be marked for your reading skills, and some will be marked for writing. The writing skills will be tested by personal questions, asking you to write your own ideas in response to the text. Reading questions will ask you to look closely at the text and use only the information you find in it, unless the question itself says otherwise. Most extracts will be between two or three pages — poems will usually be shorter.

1) What are the three reasons why reading is the key to good marks?
2) What are pieces of writing called when you study them?
3) What do you look for when you read between the lines?
4) What four things should you do before you start to answer a Reading question?
5) Why do you need to read the text twice?
6) How should your second reading be different from your first reading?
7) What should you do if you don’t understand a sentence when you’re reading?
8) How long should a summary be?
9) What should a summary include, and what should it leave out?
10) Why is it important to make a set of notes as you read through the text?
11) What should you do if the answer isn’t in your notes?
12) What are the three main sorts of question you could be asked in a comprehension exercise?
13) What do literal questions need you to do?
14) What should you do if you’re asked to give your opinion of a character in the text?
15) What’s the secret to good marks in comprehension questions?
16) Do you need to give all the main points of the text in your answer?
17) Why is it important to look at the number of marks a question is worth?
18) What should you never do in your answers?
19) Look at this extract from a poem and answer the comprehension questions:

I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day,
But now I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember,
The roses, red and white,
The violets, and the lily-cups,
Those flowers made of light!
The lilacs where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday.—
The tree is living yet!
(from "I Remember, I Remember," by Thomas Hood)

a) What is the poet describing in the extract?
b) What is the tone he uses? How do the descriptions he gives make you feel?
c) How does he describe the sun? What does he say it used to do in the morning?
d) How does the tone change in the seventh line? What is the tone when the poet talks about the past? What is the tone when he talks about "now"?
e) How do the rhymes of the poem affect the tone?
f) Why do you think the poet remembers only beautiful things about the past?
g) Write a short account of something you remember from when you were younger. Try to describe it clearly.
Looking at Literature

Literature actually means any written text. This section is about fictional literary texts — poems, novels and plays — and the techniques to use when you read them.

Reading Literature Carefully Will Win You High Marks

1) This section concentrates on reading literature, not on writing about it.
2) Your comprehension skills will be useful here; you will need to be able to scan, read closely and take clear and accurate notes from any text you study.
3) Remember: language is a tool. Authors don't just use it to tell stories, but to make characters come alive, to make you feel different emotions and to make you react in certain ways to characters and events.
4) Your job is to learn to spot how a text is creating these reactions, and what tricks the writer is using.
5) Any piece of writing uses tricks to make you react a certain way — in the same way a car advertisement is written to influence you to buy that make of car.

Literary texts are written to achieve effects, and they use many tricks to create them. You need to learn what the tricks are, and how to spot them.

Different Styles Can Create Certain Effects

The style of a text should tell you what effect the author wants. Style is part of any kind of text. It can be divided up into three key features.

1) THE LANGUAGE USED: The language could be formal or informal; it may be written like speech, or just descriptive. The sentences could be short, like those of a child, or long and rambling like an older person looking back on their life. The text may be in dialect, like a book by Walter Scott or Irvine Welsh. It might contain dialogue or none at all. It may use lots of imagery.
2) THE VOCABULARY USED: The vocabulary could be very simple, as though it was spoken by a child or a mentally-handicapped person. It could be complicated and full of technical terms, such as legal or medical terms. It could repeat itself to emphasise points.
3) THE TONE: The tone is the way in which the words used create a feeling about what is happening: a horror story uses images of darkness, shadows and gloom — nothing is ever clear. Wuthering Heights uses the images of the landscape and the weather to represent the emotions of the characters. Tennyson's poems often create a sense of imprisonment and stillness.

The style of a description can completely change how we see a situation or a character. Look at these two descriptions of Ms. Tique:

Ms. Tique was on the phone.
"You're late!" she growled at him. "What time do you call this?"
"I was held up," Dave replied, with a smile.
"What kind of an excuse is that?" Ms. Tique looked annoyed.
"The bank I was in...it was held up."

Ms. Tique laughed at his joke and winked at him across the table.
"Call me Susanna!" she whispered breathlessly.
Dave swallowed nervously. He had never met anyone as charming.
"Shall we go dancing later?" Susanna raised an eyebrow inquisitively.
She leaned forward and touched his hand.
"Asang!" said Dave. It was all he could think of to say.
Understanding the Text

Many people only remember the parts of a text they liked; you need to read it more closely, so that you can write about it and answer questions on it. That means you need to know what to look for.

The Deadly Half-Dozen — the Six Major Questions

There are six questions you need to ask about any text: who, what, where, when, how and why. Answering these questions will tell you all the basics.

1) Find Out Who Appears in the Text, and Who is Narrating

1) Look at the characters who appear, and how they are described.
   Take notes on each character to help you remember who they are and what they do and say.
2) In a play, the stage directions tell you who says what.
3) Poems, novels and short stories will have a narrator.
4) All narrators are biased when they tell a story; they may be lying or changing the facts. The text will give you clues if this is happening — there may be contradictions (see P.68).

WARNING: don’t confuse the author with the narrator. The author is the real person who wrote the text; the narrator is a voice created to talk to the reader.

Narrators and Authors — Look Who’s Talking

1) All texts have a narrative voice — the voice that talks to the reader.
2) This voice may be a character in the text, or an observer. Some narrators are biased, and give their opinions on events. Others don’t comment on what happens; they just report it.
3) Even when the text addresses the reader directly, the voice that is speaking is a narrator.
4) Whenever authors write they use different styles of narrative voice to create different effects.
5) In the course of a novel, an author may use many narrative voices; sometimes the narrator may know everything (omniscience), or the narrator may be in more than one place (omnipresence).
6) Don’t forget — never confuse authors with narrators.

2) Find Out What Happens, and What Each Character Does

1) Make a list of the characters and what they do in the course of the text.
2) Then make a list of anything else that happens. Look out for accidents, natural disasters and even the weather. They are often used to create the atmosphere of a text.
3) You can even do this for poems — just work out all the events and actions which take place. Make a list of the details so you don’t forget.
4) Note down any points when characters fail to do something; for example in Shakespeare’s King Lear, Edmund fails to send a message in time to save Cordelia’s life.
5) If you don’t understand any of the vocabulary in a text, look up what it means.

REMEMBER: no event in a literary text is really an accident — there’s always a reason why the author included it, even if it’s only for atmosphere or style.

Who and What — a test of character

Plenty to revise here. Start by learning the six major questions — they’re useful for looking at any text, and for writing reports (see P.92). Remember the difference between narrators and authors.
Where, When, How and Why

Every time you look at a text, ask these questions and note down your answers. Make sure you learn them thoroughly.

3) Look at Where the Action Takes Place

1) The setting of a text is always important. Even if it doesn’t seem relevant, you should try to find it out.
2) Some texts are deliberately set in one place, such as Samuel Beckett’s play Waiting for Godot, or Tennyson’s poem “Mariana,” both about waiting. Others are set in several places: Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest moves between town and country.

4) When the Action Happens / When the Narrator is Speaking

1) You need to know when the events of a text take place. This will help you to see the structure of the text — the reason things happen in a certain order.
2) Some texts cover a period of many years, like Wuthering Heights. Others cover a short period of time — many poems try to capture one moment in time.
3) Narrators can be immediate eyewitnesses, or they may be looking back on the past.
4) Some texts present two views of events: an eyewitness version, and a second version, reflecting on the same events much later. This happens in Great Expectations, where the narrator, Pip, sometimes speaks and acts like a child, and sometimes like a mature adult.

5) How the Action Happens and How it is Described

1) Look out for the way that the events fit together, and how they are caused.
2) This is called the plot — the story of the text.
3) Action in a text is either deliberate, or happens by chance.
4) Take notes on how the action is described; eg if the tone is angry or joyful.
5) Try to work out how the language of the passage is being used to create the tone, the characters and the descriptions.

DON’T FORGET TO ASK THE GOLDEN QUESTION:
How does the text make you react, and how has it created those reactions?

6) Why Things Turn Out The Way They Do

1) This is the argument of a text — why things happen the way they do.
2) Think about the whole chain of events — plot, characters, setting and themes (see p.51).
3) Ask yourself what the text is trying to say: for example, All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque is about the mindlessness of war, and the waste of young lives.
4) You should also ask why the text has been written in the way it has — your notes on who, what, when, where and how will help you to draw your own conclusions.

When you read a text, ask yourself the six major questions and make a note of your answers. Then you’ll have a clear understanding of what you have read.

Understanding texts — a questionable practice...

Remember — in a play the stage directions will tell you who is speaking when, and where the action is set. The problem with reading plays is that they were really written to be performed. You must always keep this in mind when you read them. Don’t forget the six major questions.
Context

Now that we have looked at the six major questions, we need to cover the idea of context.

Context means the Ideas around a Text

1) Context means any additional material which is relevant when you read a text.
2) Context material should help you to see a larger picture of the text; when it was written, perhaps why it was written. It includes critical books — what other people have said about the text when they read it.

REMEMBER: context material should help you to explore the ideas and style of a text, but it isn’t a substitute for reading the text carefully yourself.

Looking at the Author

1) Find out about the real person who wrote the text; when they lived, how they lived and whether they were happy.
2) Some authors write about their own experiences, especially poets; for example the war poets, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Rupert Brooke.
3) Some writers imagine other people’s experiences — Shakespeare often wrote about Kings, but was never a King in real life.
4) Don’t confuse the author’s life with what happens in a text. Authors change their real-life experiences when they write about them. Never confuse authors with narrators.
5) We don’t know much about the real lives of some authors — notably Shakespeare — so studying them won’t help. Other writers, like Dickens, often drew on their own experiences.

When and Why the Text was Written

1) Check the date of a text’s publication — some texts are written years before being published.
2) See if the text was written close to when it is set — or a long time before or after: for example, George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four was published in 1949.
3) Some texts are written for a specific reason; many poets write for a particular occasion, like a birth or a New Year. The Poet Laureate writes poems for State Occasions.
4) Some authors have patrons — people who give them money so they can write instead of having to do another job. Authors like Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Yeats all had patrons.
5) Some authors may be journalists — many of Dickens’ novels appeared in instalments in magazines, which means it was his job to make them long and dramatic to read.

Sources and Critics — Additional Information

1) Many authors base their texts on source material; almost all of Shakespeare’s plays are based on older versions of the same stories.
2) Reading the sources shows you what an author changed, and perhaps why it was changed.
3) Critics are people who publish books about texts, giving opinions based on their reading. These books can be helpful to pick up ideas on the themes and the style of a text.
4) Don’t just copy critics though; the Examiner wants to know your thoughts and your opinions about a text. That means you have to be able to give reasons for your ideas.

Shakespeare stole his stories — imagine that...

Complicated stuff, but you must get the idea of context clear in your mind. Remember — context includes any relevant information which isn’t part of the text itself.

Section Five — Reading Literary Texts
Context and Tone

You have a context too — where you live and who you are — and it affects you when you read. Sometimes your opinions about a text are influenced by your own experiences.

Your Context Affects How You Read Texts

1) Some texts contain things you don't understand, or you think are wrong.
2) This is because the text has a different context from your own.
3) Certain texts come from different times in history; others come from different cultures (see Section Nine, P.98).
4) Be careful when you spot these differences — don't just say that they are wrong, because they may be acceptable in another context.
5) For example, in 19th century novels, women don't have the same rights as men. When these texts were written, society accepted this view. In today's world, women and men should be treated equally. The context has changed — which changes the meaning.
6) Remember that all texts have an original context which may be different from yours — think about the context before you make up your mind about the text.
7) Find out when the book was written — and what society thought at the time. Some authors are very unpopular in their own time, but become popular in the context of later cultures.

A Change of Context Can Change the Meaning

In Act I, scene iii of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, we are told that Juliet is thirteen years old. Her mother says in line 12, "She's not fourteen." In line 69 her mother says, "Well think of marriage now." She goes on to say that younger girls than Juliet are "made already mothers."

At the time when the play is set, and in Shakespeare's own time, girls were often married by fourteen, usually in marriages arranged by their parents. This is rare today, but helps us to understand the original context of the play. Juliet is young and inexperienced; when she falls in love with the wrong person, she is caught up in her emotions against the will of her family.

Looking for the Tone of a Text

1) Each passage in a text tries to create different reactions in the reader. This affects the atmosphere of the text (the main feeling).
2) The tone of a piece is how it sounds; whether it is angry or suspicious, frightening or funny. Every single sentence of a text has a tone.
3) The easiest way to judge the tone of a passage is to read it out loud. Think about how the words should sound, and the emotion they express.
4) Practise reading short passages from different books in different styles. After a while you should try to sound out the sentences when you read the passage in your head. I know this sounds ridiculous but it actually works if you practise long enough.
5) It'll help you to judge the tone of any passage you read. This is especially useful in Exams where you have to do comprehension exercises on passages you've never seen before.

BE CAREFUL: tone is not the same as style. Style means the particular forms of language and structure used. Tone means the feel of the piece; the effect a passage has on the reader. Don't confuse the two in your essays.

Feeling the music of language — a matter of tone...

Context is a complex business, I'm afraid, but you do need to understand how it affects your reading. Don't forget the difference between style and tone — try to practise reading for tone.
Imagery

Now we're going to look at how authors create effects with language — starting with imagery.

All Texts Use Images to Create Pictures

1) Images are descriptions that create a picture of the thing they describe. They help to bring a text to life, and create a sense of tone: eg "My love is like a red, red rose" (from Robert Burns).
2) An image can be used once, or it can be continued through a passage, and expanded in different ways:

3) Let's take an example from Romeo and Juliet, Act I, scene v. This is the first scene where Romeo and Juliet meet and speak to each other. Both of them are attracted to the other, and the scene shows them flirting:

Romeo: If I profane with my unworthiest hand,
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this:
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

TALKING ABOUT THE IMAGES

1) The image of Juliet as a "shrine" is used throughout this passage.
2) Romeo says his lips are "pilgrims" to the shrine — offering to kiss her.
3) Juliet says that pilgrim's hand often touch saint's hands; so they should go "palm to palm" — and hold hands in a holy kiss.
4) The whole passage is an image of the instant attraction between the two. Juliet answers Romeo by repeating the same style of poetry he speaks, using the same rhymes of "this" and "kiss," and using the same images of pilgrims, shrines and sin.

The Two Key Forms of Image — Similes and Metaphors

1) Similes: compare two things — showing there is a point of similarity between them. Similes must always use one of the similarity words: like, as, as if, as though, as...as.

eg My love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
My love is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune.
("A Red, Red Rose", Robert Burns)

The poet's love is likened to a newly grown red rose and a sweet, tuneful melody. The poem tries to give images of what it is like to be in love, and how beautiful and natural the feeling is.

2) Metaphors: are images where one thing is said to be something else. These images aren't literally true, but they create an impression of what something is like. They are much more vivid and immediate than similes: eg Some critics say that Shakespeare was a magpie.

This doesn't mean that Shakespeare was really a black and white bird; it means that he used to steal ideas from anywhere he could find them, in the same way that a real magpie will steal all sorts of objects that it finds.

REMEMBER: similes are like something; metaphors actually are that thing.

As friendly as a llama — a spitting image

Remember the difference between similes and metaphors. They are incredibly useful definitions to use when you write about imagery in texts. Practise recognising them in different kinds of text.

SECTION FIVE — READING LITERARY TEXTS
Poetic Language

Even newspapers use poetic language to make sentences and headlines sound memorable. It’s about using language to make word music, and packing in everything you want to say as well.

The Four Main Elements of Poetic Language

1) Rhyme

1) Rhyme means that two words sound the same — even if they’re spelt differently. It’s what most people recognise in poetry.

2) Rhymes can come at the end of two lines, or in the middle of a line. Be careful though: many poems don’t use rhyme, particularly modern pieces.

Out flew the web and floated wide:
The mirror crack’d from side to side:
‘The curse is come upon me,’ cried
The Lady of Shallott.
(“The Lady of Shallott,”
Part III; Lord Tennyson)

2) Assonance

1) Assonance means two words sound similar, because they share a vowel sound. Unlike rhyme, the consonant sound doesn’t have to be the same.

2) The spelling of the words doesn’t matter: only the sound is important: eg. week, peace and weep.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach:
Three fields to cross till a farm appears:
A tap at the pain, the quick sharp scratch
And blue sport of a lighted match,
(“Meeting at Night,”
Robert Browning)

3) Alliteration

1) Alliteration means that a series of words repeat the same consonant. It’s very common in poetry and sometimes in prose texts:

Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.
(“She walks in beauty,” Lord Byron)

2) In Anglo-Saxon times, all English poetry used alliteration instead of rhyme, like the epic poem Beowulf.

3) In the 14th Century, several popular poems revived alliteration: eg The Vision of Piers Plowman.

4) Nowadays, alliteration is common in tabloid headlines: eg Rock Star in Road Rage Rant Shock.

WARNING: don’t talk about alliteration if there are only two words in the text which share the same letter — these are not clear enough examples.

4) Half-Rhyme

1) Half-rhyme is where words share similar consonants but have different vowel sounds.

2) It’s sometimes used in poetry as a variation from standard rhyme.

3) It can create a mysterious tone:

eg Wilfred Owen’s “Strange Meeting,”
or the Fool’s prophecy in Shakespeare’s play King Lear.

Fool: When usurers tell their gold i’ the field,
And bawds and whores do churches build:
(King Lear, Act III, scene ii;
William Shakespeare)

Poetic language — rhyme and reasons...

Phew! All these types of word music are used to create effects. When you read a text, you need to look for these features and say what effect they create; if they give a clearer image, or a certain tone, perhaps. Remember; the easiest way to find these features is to read the text out loud. Learn how all these poetic features sound — practise by reading the extracts on this page.
More Literary Language

Here are some more types of literary language — make sure you learn how to identify each one.

**Onomatopoeia is when a word sounds like what it means**

1) This a form of word music that writers love to use, especially when they describe noises:
   - eg. words like bang, crash, pop, whisper, and hush.
2) Onomatopoeia is also used to give an idea of movement:
   - eg. The vampire creeps slowly towards her sleeping victim.
     The snake hissed and slithered away.
3) It gives the reader a clearer image.

**Exaggeration is used to Emphasise a Point**

1) Exaggeration is often used in imagery, to make something seem especially important:
   - eg. "Come not between the dragon and his wrath;" (King Lear, Act I, scene i)
     Lear compares himself to a dragon, exaggerating the power of his anger against Cordelia.
2) Exaggeration is also used for comic effect, to make something seem ridiculous.
   - Jonathan Swift uses comic exaggeration in an essay called "A Modest Proposal" (1729), where he suggests that rich people should eat the children of the poor, since they are treated so badly anyway. He says that this would be "innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual." Obviously he didn't mean this literally; he is exaggerating to make a point about how the rich treat the poor in Ireland using a vivid image.

**Personification — describing Things as People**

1) This is common in poetry, where ideas and objects are described with human characteristics.

   For example, John Keats' poem
   "To Autumn," describes Autumn as a human being:
   Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
   Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
   Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind.

2) Making an idea or an object seem human gives it a clearer image.

   It helps the reader to identify with something more closely. This is why sailors call their ships, "she," as though the ship was a woman.

3) It's also why we talk about Jack Frost, or Death (a skeleton with a scythe), Father Time and Mother Nature. These have their origins in superstitions.

**Synonyms — Using a Wide Vocabulary**

1) Synonyms are different words that mean the same thing. Authors use synonyms to avoid repeating the same language, which would make their texts boring to read.

2) The best way to learn synonyms is by increasing your vocabulary; learning new words.

   Make sure you look up new words you find when you're reading. Use a dictionary.

3) There is also a special dictionary of synonyms, called a thesaurus. When you look up a word, all the different synonyms are listed. See if you can find one in your local library.

**Be like Coleridge — he knew what a word's worth...**

Make sure you learn these literary tricks carefully. Examiners will give high marks if you can identify these features in a text and write about them in your essays. The secret is giving an example — it proves that you know what you’re doing and that you really deserve the marks.
Looking at Old Texts

Whether you're studying English or English Literature, you'll have to read and study old texts as well as modern ones.

Watch out for Language and Spelling

1) The language and spelling in old texts can be very different from modern Standard English.
2) Most texts from the 19th and 20th Centuries are printed in modern English. Some words may have slightly different meanings.
3) In 19th Century texts, sentences tend to be much longer than in texts written in the last 50 years. You'll get used to that.
4) In texts written before the 19th Century, many words have changed meaning over time. Read the text around the word to check what it means — never assume it means exactly the same thing.

Finding out the old meaning of the word can help you to discover what a text's imagery really means.

Bassanio: What find I here?
[opening the leaden casket]
Fair Portia's counterfeit! What demigod Hath come so near creation?
(The Merchant of Venice, Act III, scene ii; William Shakespeare)

Counterfeit doesn't mean a forgery here; it means a portrait. In Shakespeare's time, the word meant the portrait of a King which appeared on a coin; Bassanio is using it as an image of Portia's portrait inside the casket, and also an image of the wealth he has won by choosing the right casket and winning Portia's hand in marriage. Over time the word came to mean a fake coin made to look like a real one.

Old Forms of Language are sometimes Used

1) Some words are just old-fashioned. In many old texts, thee and thou are used to mean you in the singular; ye is a form of you in the plural. Thy means your.
2) Other common old-fashioned forms include: doth meaning does; hath meaning has; art meaning are. Many verb forms end in the letters -st: eg wouldst, willst, goest etc.
3) Don't be put off by these forms. They look more complicated than they really are.

REMEMBER: in poetry, the usual word order of English can be changed to make the line sound better; this often means that the verb changes position.

eg "Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck," (Sonnet XIV, William Shakespeare)
= I don't pluck my judgement (draw conclusions) from the stars.

Beware of Spelling in Old Texts

1) Until the 18th Century, spellings in English weren't fixed. People spelt things as they wanted.
2) Even Shakespeare couldn't spell — he used to write his own name using several different spellings. That doesn't mean you can forget your spelling though — you will lose marks.
3) When you quote from texts with bad spelling, leave the spelling as it is in the original, but make sure you use quotation marks (see P.29).

NOTE: don't be put off old texts because the language is different. There are a lot of stories worth reading. You can always find good, clear versions of old texts in modern English to help you.

I blame Chaucer — he was always telling tales...

Old texts sound dull, I know, but you'd be surprised how funny some of The Canterbury Tales are. Don't forget — you can always start with a modern version, but you will need to look at the original text as part of your course. Just read it carefully; remember that meanings can change.

Section Five — Reading Literary Texts
Commenting on your Reading

You must be able to give an opinion about what you have read, based on the key features of style and tone which you have recognised.

Forming an Opinion about a Text

1) Read the text first. The history of a text, the life of its author and the context in which it was written are useless unless you read the text.

2) You must be ready to quote from the text. You'll need to give examples from the text to back up your opinion of it. Look at the Section on Writing Skills to help you here.

3) Don't worry if your opinion isn't the same as other people's — just make certain you can back it up with lots of examples from the text.

4) Look up the meanings of words you don't know, and be especially careful with old texts.

5) Practise recognising the key features of style and tone — you will definitely need to learn the main elements of poetic language.

6) Read other texts too — Examiners will give high marks to students who show that they have read other texts that are relevant to a text they're studying. Just make sure the text is relevant:

   e.g. If you're studying the War Poets, read All Quiet on the Western Front, by Erich Maria Remarque, and Goodbye to All That, by Robert Graves.

7) If you're asked a specific question about a text, you must only answer that question. Don't include irrelevant details just because you've learned them — you'll lose marks.

The Themes of a Text are What it is About

1) In this Section we've concentrated on the context, the style and the tone of a text.

2) You will also have to know about the themes — what the text is about.

3) This doesn't just mean the story, characters, imagery and language. It means the main ideas behind the text. You can only find these out by reading the text closely — by asking the six major questions, by taking accurate notes and by finding the important quotations.

4) From these you should be able to work out the main themes. Any context information will help you, as will any introduction to the text:

   e.g. One of the key themes of Macbeth is the divine nature of Kingship — how the natural order of the universe is upset when Macbeth seizes power.

5) Most texts have more than one theme — particularly novels and plays. It may help you to organise your notes for a text into its key themes:

   e.g. Great Expectations = Snobbery, Love, Friendship, Portable Property, Revenge.

Making a Drama out of a Play text

1) Play texts are a special case — they were written to be performed. Don't decide you understand a play before you see it performed.

2) Remember: any performance of a play is just one interpretation — particularly when you watch a Shakespeare play. Critics and theatre directors interpret Shakespeare in many different ways.

One last thing — read all about it...

Enjoy your reading: there's no point in worrying about Exams the first time you read a text. Otherwise you'll end up hating it. Texts were written to be read, not studied. So start by just reading the book, as if you were scanning. It may be hard, it may take some time, but at least you won't hate it; and that means you'll write about it much better. Try it and see.
Revision Summary for Section Five

This is a very important Section to understand, because without it you won’t be able to make any sense of Section Seven on Essay Writing Skills. Take some time now to go over the Section again, making sure that you’ve understood everything. When you feel confident and ready, then have a go at these revision questions. Remember — this exercise is about finding out what you know and what you still need to learn. Don’t cheat by looking back over the Section — there’s no point. That won’t help you in the Exam. Have a go at the questions first, then go back and look over any areas you weren’t sure about.

1) What are the three key features of style?
2) What are the six major questions?
3) Which four of these are fairly straightforward?
4) Which are the tricky two?
5) What’s the difference between authors and narrators?
6) How are narrators biased when they tell a story?
7) Explain why things don’t just happen by accident in literary texts?
8) Why do you need to know when the events in a text take place?
9) Why do you need to know when the narrator is speaking?
10) What is the Golden Question?
11) Why is it important to find out why things happen the way they do?
12) What is context?
13) Why should you think about an author’s sources?
14) How does your context affect how you read texts?
15) What should you never say about cultural and historical contexts?
16) What’s the difference between style and tone?
17) What are the two key forms of imagery?
18) Name the four main elements of poetic language.
19) What is assonance, and how does it differ from rhyme?
20) Where is alliteration most common? Give an example of a sentence using alliteration.
21) What is half-rhyme, and what tone does it create?
22) What term describes a word that sounds like what it means?
23) Why do writers sometimes talk about things as if they were people? What do we call this?
24) What is the correct term for words that mean the same thing?
25) What should you look out for in texts written before the 19th century?
26) If you’re not sure whether a word means what you think it does, what should you do?
27) What are the modern forms of: doth; goest; art; thy?
28) When was English spelling fixed?
29) What are the themes of a text?
30) How do you find out the themes of a text?
31) Write a short essay about a book you read recently, using the skills in this Section. Start by asking the six major questions, then write about the style and the tone of the book. If you know anything about the context of the book then write about that too.
32) Find a short poem and read it carefully. Make a note of any features of poetic language it contains. What is the theme of the poem?
Non-Fiction and Media Texts

For your English course, you’ll have to read non-fiction texts as well as fiction. Don’t panic though — the skills you need are exactly the same.

Everything We Read or Watch is Biased

1) During the 20th Century, the amount of information being stored and produced has increased massively.
2) This doesn’t just mean books and plays; it includes newspapers, films, television and radio programmes, adverts and the internet.
3) These sources of information are called the media; they present us with different views of the world, for entertainment or for news.
4) All media are biased; they present an opinion of the truth rather than the whole truth. This is because they are affected by their context (see PR.45-46) and their culture (see P.97).
5) Even news programmes are biased: American television news focuses on different stories from British programmes. This is because some stories are more relevant in the USA than in Britain.
6) Any information is a text that can be looked at critically. That means reading it carefully, using your comprehension skills (see Section Four, P.35); looking at the context, and trying to work out what the text is saying, and what opinion it is putting forward.

BEWARE: many media texts claim to be unbiased and say that they present only the truth. Don’t believe them. Make sure you look at them critically.

What to Look For in Non-Fiction Texts

1) Just because something is non-fiction, this doesn’t mean it isn’t biased. In fact, many of the tricks non-fiction writers use are the same as the ones used in fiction (see Section Five, P.42).
2) Look at the style of the text. You need to look at the language, tone and vocabulary used, and the context. When you read the text, ask yourself the six major questions (PR.43-4).

The Top Five Tricks used in Non-Fiction Texts

1) Check any information given, especially statistics, to see if anything important has been left out. Many texts generalise; they say something is true in all cases when there are exceptions.
2) See if emotional vocabulary has been used — language gives clear clues to the bias of the text: eg some news reports may say “limited air strikes”; others, “illegal military interference.”
3) Information can be exaggerated to make it sound more interesting: eg “Music Star Marriage on the Rocks” sounds more exciting than “Married Music Stars have a Tiff.”
4) Watch out for tone: whether the presentation is serious or comic: eg some interviewers describe the bad habits of the person they interview if they want to present a negative opinion.
5) Opinions are often presented as though they were facts. This is difficult to detect, but it affects whether or not we believe and trust that text. Many news reports speculate about what will happen in the future — these are not facts but opinions.

Television and Film are Texts Too

1) It might seem a little strange to talk about film and TV as texts, but they are.
2) Even though people appear to be talking to you in film and TV, they are usually speaking from a written script. The language used is a written text made to sound like natural speech.
3) That’s why it is very important to study media language, especially on television — because it’s often trying to sound as natural as possible. It can tell you a lot about how real people speak.
4) TV and film include other elements apart from language: visual pictures, music, sound effects, architecture (sets) and lighting. You need to practise recognising how these elements help create effects that provoke responses in viewers — in similar ways to the theatre.

Section Six — Reading Non-Fiction
**Fiction vs Fact**

When you look at any text, you must first decide whether it is a piece of fiction or not. Unfortunately, the distinction isn’t always that clear.

### Non-Fiction Texts Aren’t Always Factual

1) Once you have learned to recognise the styles of different kinds of non-fiction text, you should be able to identify any bias in the text, and any confusion between facts and opinion.

2) Many non-fiction texts are deliberately written as a mixture of fact and opinion. A good essay contains both fact and opinion. Newspaper editorials do the same.

3) If a text puts forward an argument, then it will give opinions based on the facts, and will use facts as examples to illustrate their points. Sometimes the text will say clearly when it is giving an opinion, sometimes it won’t. You will need to read carefully for opinions and facts.

4) Many texts use quotations from other texts. This is one way to back up an argument, but the source of the quotation must be given. Look for the place, the author/speaker and the date.

5) Some texts will use quotations as though they are facts. Be very careful; many quotations just give someone else’s opinion: eg quotations from essays on Shakespeare by literary critics; the opinion of the Prime Minister’s Press Officer on the success of the government.

6) Many news reports today are a mixture of fact and opinion. Reporters tell the story of some people involved in a news event — we hear what happened and their opinion of the event. The report has been written to make you respond emotionally, or to make you laugh — it doesn’t just contain factual information.

Always look out for the relationship between facts and opinions in any non-fiction text you read. It will give you lots to write about in Coursework or Exam essays.

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**Some Fiction is Written in the Style of Non-Fiction**

1) Many authors use the language and tone of non-fiction texts when they write — some novels use letters or diaries to tell the story: eg Bridget Jones’ Diary by Helen Fielding.

2) Sometimes authors include reports from fictional newspapers, or police reports, to make their stories sound authentic.

3) Many soap operas on TV and radio are written in the style of documentaries. The writers try to make the characters and situations seem real, even though they aren’t. Of course, some soap operas aren’t very realistic at all.

4) This sort of real-life presentation is most commonly seen in adverts: when a company wants you to buy a product, they want to amuse you and make you feel that you need that product.

5) When you read a text, look for signs that it might be written in a non-fiction style, and ask yourself what effect the author is trying to create. Over the next few pages, we’ll look at the styles and tones of some popular non-fiction texts that will come up in your Course or Exam.

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**Fiction and Fact — Forming a Faction**

There’s plenty to watch out for when you’re looking at non-fiction texts, especially media texts. You must always read closely for fact and opinion — it’ll help you to work out the bias of the text. Remember the top five tricks: find two examples of each in any newspaper and learn them.

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**Section Six — Reading Non-Fiction**
The Media

The word media is literally “the means” by which something is done. Nowadays it’s used to mean the news media — television, radio and newspapers etc.

Newspapers have Several Different Styles

1) Every newspaper has a basic style — either it’s a tabloid or a broadsheet. Tabloids are easier to read and tend to focus on sensational stories with big, bold headlines.
2) Tabloids often mix fact with opinion in the same article — they often use biased and emotional language.
3) Some tabloids operate rules about how many stories can appear on each page, and restrict the number of news stories so that they can include stories about famous stars or scandals.
4) Broadsheets are large newspapers that fold in half. They tend to be more serious in tone, and are separated into different sections which contain different styles of article.
5) Most opinion articles are clearly marked, so that the reader can tell they are opinion not fact.
6) Reporting tends to be divided up into news reporting, analysis and opinion (editorial section), lifestyle articles (health, travel and food, for example), interviews, reviews of books, films or cultural events, sports reports and sometimes extracts from new books.

Reading Newspapers to find their Style

Here is a sample extract. Read it carefully and learn how to spot the key features of its style.

Chukka Your Man Celine!
Celeb Chef’s Life of Hell with Love Rat Hewley
by Our Special Correspondent

Celebrity chef Celine Strimpet broke down in tears yesterday as she spoke about her unhappy marriage to polo legend James Hewley. Hewley, 37, was sensationally photographed cheating at polo and enjoying the attentions of a dusky Argentine beauty at a toff’s polo match in Buenos Aires last week.

4) Hewley’s age and his cheating at polo are irrelevant if the article is just about his marriage.
5) By adding extra facts, the article gives an opinion which appears to be based on lots of evidence.
   It doesn’t actually give any specific evidence; even about the girl in Argentina.
6) The story is about two famous people, and it is presented in a sensational, exaggerated tone.
7) Everything about the piece is written to demand a response from the reader — “her unhappy marriage” suggests that the marriage was only unhappy for her.
8) The phrase “sensationally photographed” suggests that the pictures give clear evidence of Hewley’s cheating — but the photos are not printed, so no evidence is offered at all.

The ‘papers are biased — it’s all news to me...

Reading newspapers is a great way to practise your critical skills. You could be given a newspaper article in your Exam, or as part of your coursework — see if you can remember the top five tricks. Look for the key features of style as well as the content of the piece.

Section Six — Reading Non-Fiction
Newspapers and Magazines

Features are the most common kind of article you’ll come across in Exams or Coursework. These are longer than news stories and usually look in depth at a particular story. That means they present an argument, with facts and a variety of opinions, often taken from short interviews.

The Difference between Magazines and Newspapers

1) Magazines and newspapers are written for different reasons.
2) A magazine focuses on features and news centred on a particular subject or written for a particular group of people; for example, football or music magazines, women’s or men’s magazines, car enthusiasts’ magazines etc.
3) Newspapers are daily or weekly publications; magazines are usually monthly.
4) Because magazines are written with a specific audience in mind, the articles are often written in a particular style or tone — whenever you read a magazine extract, make sure you know where it came from. Think about how the context is going to affect the text — look for the five tricks.

Recognising the Style of a Feature Article

This sample extract shows the style of a feature article.

Where the Sun Never Shines
by Martin Barker in London, additional reporting Zebba Rienens.

For thousands of years mankind has looked to the heavens for inspiration. In Ancient Greece, astronomers searched the stars, believing them to be forms of the almighty Gods. During the Renaissance, Galileo looked for the order of the universe through his telescope. Now one scientist believes he has at last uncovered one of the mysteries of the stars — their origin.

"People talk about the Big Bang theory as though it has been scientifically proved. It hasn’t!" Jed Weiner hits the table with a baseball bat as he says this; so I am inclined to accept whatever he chooses to say.

We are sitting in Weiner’s Honolulu Office, from which he runs his freelance astronomy agency. “Ever since NASA kicked me out, they’ve been trying to destroy my funding and discredit my research. Well not any more! No way, my friend!” Weiner’s puffy red face is inches from my own. This is one of the most brilliant astronomers of his age; I don’t want to offend him by laughing.

Beauty magazines — they must have good features...

Feature articles are common in Reading Exams — you must learn how to spot the style and tone. Remember — newspapers and magazines are written in columns, so read them that way.
Adverts

Adverts try to manipulate our feelings in order to make us buy a product. You may have to compare a series of adverts in a comprehension exercise, or write about the effects of advertising.

Adverts are about Selling Products
1) Sounds simple enough, but some adverts hide their product behind a story or a celebrity. We don’t realise they’re just selling something.
2) You need to learn to look at them critically.
3) Adverts often use the top five tricks. Be particularly careful with any statistics they give — most are confusing (see below).
4) Adverts appear in many forms: posters, pages in magazines, television adverts etc.

REMEMBER: even though adverts come in different forms, they use the same tricks of tone, language and context to try to sell their products.

Statistics can be Manipulated
1) Many adverts use statistics to prove a point. They claim that statistics are facts and cannot be wrong. Presenting statistics this way makes them seem like scientific truth.
2) Statistics can be misleading though, especially if they aren’t very specific.

Example: “White On: Nine out of ten customers prefer it.”
This statistic looks impressive, but you must ask if it’s specific enough.
 a) It doesn’t say who the customers are. If we don’t know who they are, we can’t tell if the statistic is impressive or not. The survey might only have asked ten customers altogether.
 b) It doesn’t say what they prefer White On to — there’s no real comparison between White On and its rivals. Perhaps they prefer White On to dirty clothes, which isn’t much of a recommendation.

The advert gives an impressive-sounding statistic which doesn’t actually mean much at all. Look out for statistics like this, which give no real evidence.

3) Remember — many non-fiction texts use statistics to support their arguments, from newspaper articles to history books. Ask yourself whether the statistics give any real evidence.

Some Adverts use Experts to make you believe them
1) Adverts may use a scientist or a top breeder to recommend a product. We accept what they say because we are told they are experts.
2) The fact that they are experts is irrelevant. They have been paid to say how good a product is.
3) Scientific tests may claim to prove a product is better than "our leading competitor" — but won’t say who the competitor is. Watch out for so-called experts.

Adverts Use Slogans to Stick in Your Head
1) Slogans are easy-to-remember phrases which stay in your head and remind you of the product in an advert.
2) They often use the tricks of poetic language (see P48).
3) They also appeal to our fantasies — the kind of lifestyle we want to have — and to our worries — such as whether we’re overweight or unpopular.
4) Advertising can influence people in negative ways — it reinforces stereotypes about thin people being beautiful, for example. This is a popular Exam essay topic.

Section Six — Reading Non-Fiction
Film and TV

Part of your Coursework may include writing a review or an essay on a film or TV programme you've watched. To pick up good marks, you'll need to use your critical skills to interpret them.

**Film and TV are not the same**

1. Film and TV are similar media, because they use the same tricks of sound, pictures, light and music.
2. Television pictures are formed by tiny dots of light — film pictures are formed by shining a light through a roll of tape.
3. Films are shown in cinemas and people pay to see them.
4. TV is shown on television sets, and shows all kinds of programmes. It's paid for by sponsorship — either by advertising or by a licence fee, like the BBC.
5. Don't forget the difference — film makers spend much more money making and advertising their product because they need as many people as possible to see it. Most films tell a complete story, so that people feel it was worth seeing.
6. Television companies want to have the biggest share of viewers, so they try to produce a variety of programmes that will keep people watching. TV programmes often tell part of a story, so that you will watch the next episode to see what happens — like soap operas.

Films and TV programmes can be fiction or non-fiction — both use the same techniques to affect you. The secret of TV and film is how they make you feel.

**What to Look for in Films**

1. Look at what kind of film it is — fiction or documentary (non-fiction film).
2. Look at where it was made — this will tell you the context.
3. Think about which characters are sympathetic and which ones seem evil. Decide how the story made you feel.
4. Think about how the film looks — bright or dark, colourful or not.
5. Listen to the music at the beginning and during the film — think how it makes you feel.
6. Ask yourself if the film was realistic or not — whether the story and characters were believable.
7. Think about whether the film kept your attention — if the events happened very fast, or if the action was slow-moving; if there was a serious point, or if the film was just fun.
8. Decide whether you think it was a good or bad film — but make sure you can give your reasons. Remember — this is your opinion; other people may see it differently.

**Watching Television — without being a couch potato**

1. Television programmes come in many forms — documentaries, game shows, chat shows etc.
2. Each form of programme has its own style — soap operas are realistic or fantasy, chat shows are usually funny and news programmes are almost always serious.
3. Think about the way pictures and music are used to create a tone — especially in documentaries. Remember — most documentaries mix fact and opinion.
4. Listen to the way people on TV talk — they may seem like they're talking to you, but they're usually reading a script. On news programmes they will sound serious and use formal language; on chat shows people will sound friendly and jokey. Listen out for the language and tone.

See your name in lights — become an electrician...

Remember — the music, pictures and words of a film or television programme have been chosen to make you feel what the director wants you to feel. To pick up top marks in essay work, you need to show how these tricks are being used. That means watching and listening carefully.

Section Six — Reading Non-Fiction
Autobiographies, Diaries, Biographies

Time to look at the main types of non-fiction book. They're often easier to read than fiction, which means you can pick up lots of marks for writing about them.

**Autobiographies give a Personal View of Events**

1) Most autobiographies are written by famous people.
2) They give a personal view of the events of their lives, and often include stories about their careers, the people they worked with and their private lives.
3) People read autobiographies because they enjoy finding out about the lives of the famous — the same reason why people read tabloids.
4) Most autobiographies are light-hearted, but some authors use them to make serious points. Recently there have been books about living with cancer, by John Diamond and Ruth Picardie.
5) Fiction writers often write in the style of an autobiography. This is called a first person narrative, because the story is told using "I" and "me".
6) Autobiographies give information on how things have changed during a person's life — they are often written by artists, actors, politicians and journalists.

**REMEMBER:** autobiographies are biased. Writers change the events of their lives to make themselves look good, and to simplify the past. Some blame other people for their mistakes, or admit them, claiming they have reformed.

**Diaries are Personal Daily Records**

Dear diary, today didn't go entirely to plan...

1) A diary or a journal is a record of what one person thinks, feels and experiences day by day. Don't forget — it's an opinion.
2) Diaries are private books — usually only written for the author to read. People don't keep many secrets from themselves, so they often admit things in diaries that they wouldn't admit in letters or formal writing. They are very direct in style.
3) Some diaries are published after the writer's death — particularly diaries written by famous people or by writers.
4) Some are published because they are very entertaining, and because they give lots of information about daily life at the time they were written — Samuel Pepys kept a detailed diary of daily life between 1660 and 1669, which is a valuable historical source.
5) The best diaries give a sense of what it felt like to be alive at a certain time — The Diary of Anne Frank records the life of a young Jewish girl living during the Second World War. She tells us about life hiding from the Nazis. She died in a Concentration Camp.

**Biographies are Life Stories Written by Other People**

1) Biographies tell the life stories of famous people — but they are written by someone else.
2) They can be accurate, researched books, or they can be full of scandal and gossip. One of the best written biographies in English is James Boswell's Life of Dr Johnson.
3) Make sure you look for clear evidence to support any argument in a biography.
4) All biographies are biased — many writers will include a controversial fact or opinion in a biography so that they start an argument in the media. This is a way to get free publicity.

**Life stories — better than the alternative...**

These types of book can win you easy marks — and you can read books you enjoy. That makes them perfect for coursework essays. Just remember to watch out for bias and evidence.
Letters, Travel and Criticism

Three more popular non-fiction styles here — make sure you know about each one. Examiners always give good marks for coursework essays on different types of non-fiction texts — it makes a change from newspaper articles all the time.

Looking at People's Collected Letters

1) Some people write letters to their friends or for business reasons over a period of many years.
2) Often these correspondences are published after the writer's death, if the person was famous — in books of Collected Letters: for example, the poet Philip Larkin's letters.
3) These letters can tell us what the writer was really like to their friends, whether he or she was happy and if they asked for advice on their work.
4) Sometimes an author's letters to a publisher or an editor can show whether a book had to be rewritten much before it was printed. T.S. Eliot's famous poem The Waste Land was heavily edited before it was published in 1922.
5) An author's letters are often very well written, so readers enjoy the style. Nowadays, fewer people write letters, so there are fewer good collections. If you're studying a classic text from the past, then reading the author's letters is a great way to find out about the context (P.45).
6) Some fiction authors use letters to tell the story — see P.99 on letter writing technique.

Travel Writing is a Popular Style of Writing

1) Travel writing tries to give a sense of what it feels like to be in a particular country — even if you've never been there.
2) There are loads of books and articles written about travelling. Many newspapers have a travel section.
3) Some travel books are guidebooks — they're written to tell you what to do when you travel to a country and what to avoid, like the Lonely Planet series.
4) Other travel books are written to describe what it is like to visit a place. This includes describing the culture, the lifestyle and the people. Look out for how much detail is given.
5) These books are usually written from the point of view of an outsider. The native culture is described by comparing it with the culture which the author comes from. Bill Bryson's Notes from a Small Island, describes travelling around Britain from the point of view of an American.
6) Travel books are often comic — they show the clash of cultures between the author and the country he is in. Different cultures behave in different ways (see Section Nine).
7) Some travel books are well-researched by experts; others are written by first time visitors.

Critical Books can help you look at Texts

1) Critical books include books written about authors, actors or politicians that look at their work rather than their lives — The Violent E Tiffany by John Carey is about Dickens' imagination.
2) Critical books are also written by scientists, philosophers and lawyers.
3) They are written for two reasons: to put forward a theory or to attack someone else's theory.
4) A theory is an opinion based on research and evidence, which is used to explain facts or events: for example, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, or Darwin's Theory of the Origin of Species.
5) Good critical books are written to help people to understand — that's why they're useful.

Travel writing on boats is fun — unless it's stormy...

All of these book styles are non-fiction. That doesn't stop you writing about them in your coursework though. Remember — you will always write better about things you're interested in.

Section Six — Reading Non-Fiction
Pictures, Posters and Leaflets

You may not think these topics have much to do with English — but you may have to look at a leaflet or a poster when you read an advertising text, and that means you need to know about looking at pictures. Otherwise you won’t pick up all the marks.

Looking at Pictures — Finding a Meaning

1) Pictures include paintings, photographs, sketches and cartoons — as well as moving pictures on TV or Film.
2) Pictures are attempts to capture what the eye sees — they can be realistic, like a photograph or some paintings, or unrealistic, like many modern paintings, or cartoons.
3) They use colour, light and shadow to create effects of tone — all pictures try to make you feel something.
4) For your Coursework and Exams, the most important thing you need to know is how pictures are used with text — for example in newspapers or on television.
5) Think about how the picture makes you feel — remember, someone has created the picture to make you look at the world in a certain way. You need to be able to say what that is.
6) See if there is any text with the picture — whether it helps explain the picture, like a newspaper cartoon, or the picture explains the text, like a photo in a news article.
7) Think about why the picture has been included — whether it is relevant to the text or not, or whether it creates bias: eg. An article about government ministers wasting money might have a picture of a minister drinking champagne at New Year. The picture isn’t directly relevant to the story, but it gives the impression that all government ministers drink champagne all the time.

Remember — all pictures are biased, even photographs. They create a view of what the world is like using different tricks like lighting and colour.

Posters and Leaflets are Advertising Texts

1) Posters and leaflets use pictures and words to advertise something. This can be anything from a rock band’s tour to a shop sale or a soft drink.
2) A poster is a sheet of paper fixed to a wall or a board. It usually has a small amount of text and a picture to catch the eye.
3) The text of a poster will be brief — it’s written to give all the important information as quickly as possible. This is like a slogan — advertisers want you to remember their product later. In the case of a play or a concert, they want you to remember when and where it is happening.
4) Sometimes the poster will have a slogan or a joke: eg “He’s back. And this time he’s hungry.”
5) The picture on a poster will be eye-catching — a photograph of the band looking cool, or a cartoon-style picture. Some posters use colour, others use black and white.
6) Leaflets are similar to posters, except they are handed out to people.
7) The problem with leaflets is making people read them.
8) They need to explain what they are promoting clearly and in more detail than a poster. They also need to be eye-catching and clear.
9) Look at where the information is given — whether a free gift is offered, or whether the price only appears in small print at the bottom.
10) Look for dates, times and any other information on the leaflet.

Advertising with pictures — how to make Monet...

You must learn this page to help you look at newspaper or magazine articles, and at advertisements. Remember that pictures are biased — even photos can be altered by computer.

SECTION SIX — READING NON-FICTION
Unseen Texts in the Exam

Now it's time to look at the kind of non-fiction questions you'll have to answer in an Exam.

Unseen Texts are set as Comprehension Exercises

1) Even though you won't see the text until you are doing the Exam, don't panic — you can do six things to improve your chances.

2) You can practise the skills you'll need on any non-fiction text you've never read before. Practise reading and summarising newspaper articles. Write a paragraph on the style and the tone.

3) Work out what kind of text it is — a magazine, a newspaper or a travel book; a feature article or a critical text.

4) The key skills for looking at a text are given in Section Four. Remember to scan the text, read it closely, take notes of the important details and be prepared to answer questions.

Six Useful Points to Learn

1) Read the questions carefully to decide what the Examiner is asking you to look for.

2) Check your notes and then the text to find the answer. If you quote the exact words in the text, make sure you don't forget to use quotation marks.

3) Always check to see how many marks are given for each question. Never make your answers longer than they need to be — that's just wasting time.

4) Use all the information you're given. If there's a picture, make sure you talk about it in any essay question — why it is there, what effect it has.

5) Look for any information with the article or in the introduction which tells you the date and the source of the piece, or even the author — this will help you work out the context.

6) See if the passage is an extract from a longer text — this may mean that some parts of the argument are left out. Only write about the text which is actually given in the paper.

Look out for the top five tricks — especially any confusion between fact and opinion. Always remember to read carefully to see if the text is biased.

Comparing and Contrasting is a Popular Exam Question

1) Many Exam unseen exercises will ask you to compare and contrast two or three texts — you will definitely have to do this as part of your Coursework too.

2) The secret is not to panic — scan and read each text in turn. Then make a list of what the texts have in common, and then what the main differences are.

3) The texts will be about the same subject from different points of view.

4) Context will really help you here — if you can say something about the context of each text, it will help you give an opinion on why the two texts have different views: eg a man in 1890 will have a different view on the rights of women from a woman writing in 1970, because they come from different contexts (see PP.45-46).

5) Common topics for unseen exercises are: the Environment, Men and Women and Food and Drink. They sound boring, but if you learn the skills on this page, you'll get high marks anyway.

WARNING: don't attack the opinions in an unseen text unless you can give reasons. Remember: you may not have the whole argument in front of you.

My favourite unseen text — The Invisible Man...

Phew! Talk about details... but they're all important. You need to know exactly what you are doing when you get into the Exam — that means learning the key skills now, so get going.
Revision Summary for Section Six

Lots to revise here. Make sure that everything in this Section is clear before you start Section Seven on Essay Writing Skills. Remember that non-fiction texts don’t just contain facts — they also give opinions. You need to read them carefully to see how the style and tone of the piece show the bias of the writer. Go over Section Four on Comprehension Skills — unless you can use them well, you’ll struggle with reading any text. Look at the questions below to help you revise what you’ve covered here. If you have any problems, then go back to the relevant page and look over it again.

1) What is meant by “the media”?
2) What should you look for in non-fiction texts?
3) What are the top five tricks used to create bias in non-fiction texts?
4) Why is information exaggerated?
5) Is non-fiction necessarily fact?
6) Why do you need to be careful with facts and opinions?
7) Is the news fact, opinion or both?
8) What are the differences between tabloids and broadsheets?
9) Give four features of tabloid style. Write a mock article in the style of a tabloid.
10) Give three differences between newspapers and magazines.
11) Where are adverts sometimes hidden?
12) Are statistics reliable?
13) Give two ways that statistics can mislead.
14) What are slogans?
15) What do advertising slogans have in common with poetic texts?
16) How can advertising influence people in negative ways?
17) Give four differences between TV and film.
18) What elements create tone in TV and films?
19) Why are autobiographies popular?
20) How are autobiographies biased?
21) What is the style of a diary like?
22) Why can it be useful to read an author’s collected letters?
23) In what way are travel books comic?
24) How can critical books help you?
25) Why is it important to be able to analyse pictures?
26) Give two reasons why a picture might be included with a text.
27) What’s the difference between leaflets and posters?
28) Why do you need to look at the layout of a poster or leaflet?
29) What shouldn’t you do when tackling an unseen question?
30) What are the six things you can do to improve your chances?
31) What’s the secret of comparing and contrasting texts?
32) Why is context important when comparing and contrasting texts?
33) Write a short essay about a TV news programme you watched recently. How was the news presented? Did you spot any of the top five tricks being used? Was the programme giving facts or opinions or a mixture of the two? Did you believe what the programme said?
34) Find a magazine advert and write some notes on how it is written. What is it trying to advertise? Does it use a joke or a slogan? Does it use a picture? Why does it use that particular picture? What style is it aiming for — is it for men or women, young people or old? Would you buy the product because of the advert?
How to Write an Essay

An essay is an attempt to answer a question — it's a short piece of writing on a particular subject. You'll have to write essays for your Coursework and in your Exams. This Section is about how to write a good essay, and the common essay mistakes to avoid.

Your Essay Work will always begin with a Question

1) GCSE essays are about answering questions — there are two main kinds you will come across during your English course.
2) Literary essays are essays about specific texts that you have read.
   You'll have to respond to the text — you must show you have read the text, and use it to answer questions and give opinions about it.
3) Personal essays are essays about a specific topic — like the Death Penalty or the growth of the Internet — where you have to give your personal opinion on the topic, giving reasons to support what you say.

Essays are about Giving Answers

1) The biggest mistake that most people make with essays is failing to answer the question. You mustn't fall into this trap.
2) Sometimes the question is given to you clearly:

   eg  How do the poems of Owen and Bassoon evoke what life was like in the Trenches?
       What does it mean to be a "gentleman" in Great Expectations?
       Does Twelfth Night really have a happy ending?

3) Read the question carefully before you begin your answer. Then give your answer using the words of the question, giving reasons and examples to support your argument.
4) Sometimes the question will be unclear — you'll have to work out what it's asking you to do:

   eg  "The problem with Romeo and Juliet is they are too impatient." Discuss.
       Give your opinion on the Environmental policy of this country.
       Give reasons for and against road-building.

5) You need to rephrase these statements as questions — this will tell you what you need to think about, and how to start answering them:

   eg  Are Romeo and Juliet too impatient? Is this a problem?
       What do you think of the Environmental policy of this country?
       What are the reasons for and against road-building?

6) Be careful — the first example is actually asking you to think about two ideas. Examiners often try to catch people out with this kind of question, so keep your eyes open.
7) Look at any extra information that's given — if there's a quotation, see if the source is given. If the essay question comes at the end of a comprehension exercise, then it'll definitely be based on the extracts given — read them closely and use any relevant information in your answer:

   eg  The example question about Environmental problems would probably come at the end of an exercise about the Environment. You should read the extracts again to find out what information is given about Environmental policy in this country. Then use that information to answer the question, giving your opinion of the policy at the same time.

Essay work — a question of answers...

This is where you really need to concentrate — if your essay skills are good, your marks will be good too. Remember your reading skills from Section Four — if you don't, go over them again.
Coursework Essays

Coursework essays are the key to your written work. If you can write a good, clear essay for Coursework, then you'll be halfway to writing good Exam essays too — but you'll need practice.

Reading the Question Carefully

1) For Coursework essays, you'll usually be given a choice of questions, either about a text or about a topic.
2) Make sure you read through all of the questions. Don't just choose the first one which looks easy — sometimes it may not be as easy as you think. Watch out for trick questions.
3) Take time to work out exactly what each question wants you to do.
4) Look for the question words — describe, explain, analyse, compare, explore etc. Each word is asking you to do something different.
5) Above all, think what you need to do to get the marks for answering the question.

Essay Questions will ask you What, Why or How

1) Literary questions will ask you about a text or a group of texts. They will focus on what the themes are, what the characters do and why, as well as how the text makes the reader react (see Section Five, P.42).
2) Personal essay questions will ask you what the two sides of a debate are (e.g. for and against something). They'll also ask how you feel about it and why you have that opinion.
3) Remember — most questions will only ask you to do one or two of these things. Make sure you answer the question you've chosen properly.

Learn the Meanings of the Eight Great Question Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>analyse</td>
<td>work out the key features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compare</td>
<td>work out similarities and differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe</td>
<td>say/explain what something is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss</td>
<td>argue for and against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>examine</td>
<td>test something carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explain</td>
<td>make clear (what, how, why)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explore</td>
<td>look at something closely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>investigate</td>
<td>search for facts and causes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poor Presentation will lose you Marks

1) Your essay must look neat and tidy so the Examiner can read it.
2) Your handwriting must be clear and readable.
3) Space your essay out neatly — write the title at the top and underline it, then leave one line blank underneath it.
4) Remember to write in paragraphs — leave a gap between the margin and the beginning of each paragraph.
5) If you make a spelling mistake or write the wrong word, put brackets around it and cross it out neatly with two lines through the word. Don't scribble all over it or use a whitener.
6) If you re-read your essay and realise you need to explain something, put an asterisk * at the end of the sentence you need to explain, and write a short explanation in the margin. This is the only time you should write in the margin.
7) If you find that you need more than two asterisks on a page, you're not planning the essay properly before you write it. Spend some time revising planning and drafting (P.66).

Essays are like film stars — they need to look good...

You must learn the eight great question words — they'll help you work out what you're asked.
Planning and Drafting

I know it's boring, but the secret of essay writing really is good planning. The stupid thing is that most people practise planning, learn how to do it well and then forget to do it when they write.

Proper Planning will pick up Better Marks

1) Some people say that planning is a waste of time — it is if you want to throw marks away. In fact it can save you time and energy.
2) Planning means organising your material to help you answer the question.
3) The whole point is to help you to work out the relevant material for your answer, and the right order in which to present it. A good plan will help you write a clearer essay — and that means more marks.
4) A good plan will tell you what your argument is and which examples you need to support it — that'll save you loads of time when you write.

The Six Steps to Planning a Good Essay

1) Work out exactly what the question is asking you to do — don't panic.
2) If it doesn't matter if you have no idea what you're going to write, Just stop and think for a moment about how to answer the exact words of the question.
3) Scribble a rough list of everything you think might be relevant. Don't worry about the order yet — but number each point clearly so you can find it later.
4) Look at the key word of the question — how, what, why or one of the eight great question words. Go through your list of relevant points and choose the ones that answer the question. To compare, divide your list into two columns — similarities and differences.
5) Look at the whole question again. Check that you haven't missed anything. Then decide what your opinion is. Use your points to support your opinion — this will be your argument.
6) Draw up a new plan — write the question at the top, then your opinion. Give your best point as the first piece of evidence to support your opinion. Think of examples to support your first point, then link it to the next point you want to make. You'll need at least five points.

REMEMBER: if you're not sure what your opinion is, state the arguments for and against. Answer the question by comparing the views on each side.

Drafting means Writing a Rough Version

1) This sounds like a real pain — but if you want to do well in Coursework essays it's worth doing. Drafting can stop you from writing a bad essay.
2) Once you have your plan, you should have your basic argument and your key points and examples. Drafting is an easy way to see if your plan works.
3) Write a rough version of your essay. Think what you want to say and try to follow the stages of your plan. Start by stating your answer to the question and giving a brief explanation, then introduce your key point.
4) Give examples to support your argument. Stop after you've written a page. If you think the essay has gone wrong before then, you should stop straight away.
5) Ask yourself if your draft answers the question, and if the examples really support your points.
6) Think about whether your opinion is right and whether your first point is really the best point. If you're not sure then write a new plan. It's better to start again now than have to do it later.

Don't be like Clinton — he was a draft-dodger...

Planning and drafting saves you time and effort — thinking before writing means fewer mistakes.

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Introducing Your Argument

The hardest part of any essay is beginning it. The first sentence has to tell the Examiner that you are answering the question, that you are organised and that your essay isn’t going to be boring. All that from one sentence — so you’d better start practising.

Your Introduction needs to Grab the Attention

1) A good introduction does two things — it states clearly what the essay is about and how you are going to answer the question.
2) Don’t waste words — Examiners don’t want a whole list of every book you’ve read, and they don’t want a summary of everything you’re going to say in the essay. They want you to get on with it.
3) That means grabbing their attention and showing them that you know what you’re talking about — controlling your argument and your tone.

How to write a Good Introduction

1) Your opening line should try to answer the question you were given. If you can’t answer it straight away, then say how you are going to answer it in your essay.
2) The rest of the paragraph should make your best point and begin your argument, explaining how it is relevant to answering the question.
3) Use the exact words of the question. This shows the Examiner that you’ve understood the question fully. If the question asks you to look at two texts, make sure you mention both. If you have to give arguments for and against something, give a summary of the key point on both sides.
4) End the paragraph by summing up what you’ve said. The next paragraph should develop this point, explaining it further and telling the Examiner what examples you’re going to use to back up your argument. Keep your argument clear.

Example of an Essay Introduction

Why should we sympathise with Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*?

Willy Loman deserves our sympathy because he is a victim of the American way of life. He kills himself so that his family will receive the money from his life insurance policy. He thinks it is the only way he can help the people he loves. All his hopes and dreams are shown to be false — and he believes that this is his own fault.

In fact it is the fault of the society he lives in, which says that making money and following your dream are the things that make you a real man. Willy believes this. When he can’t make money as a salesman any more, he decides he is no longer a man, and he will be worth more to his family dead than alive. The great tragedy of the play isn’t that Willy loses sight of what is important, but that he never understood what was truly important in the first place: the love of his family.

Looking at this Example

1) The opening sentence gives a clear answer to the question. It sounds sure of itself. The rest of the opening paragraph explains the first point — why Willy is a victim.
2) The end of the first paragraph links up with the beginning of the next. The first paragraph explains why Willy is a victim — he believes that his failure to succeed is his own fault.
3) The second paragraph explains that in fact the American way of life is to blame. This continues the argument, but makes a new point — about what the great tragedy of the play really is.
4) The essay can now move on — continuing the argument and trying to answer the question.

Essays are like strangers — they must be introduced...

Writing introductions takes practice — you really must sound interested, organised and clear.

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Your Argument

An argument is the series of reasons you give explaining your answer to the essay question. Everything you put in your essay is part of your argument.

A Good Argument is about being Clear not Right

1) English essays have no right answers. It doesn’t matter what essay question you’re given — there’s no one correct answer.

2) That means you don’t win marks for being right in essays — you win them for making a good, well-supported and clear argument.

3) In literary essays the Examiners want you to show them that you’ve read the texts, that you’ve understood them and that you can answer questions on them, giving examples.

4) In personal essays you need to show that you’ve understood the question, and answer it giving examples to support your own opinion.

Your Argument must be Logical

1) This just means that your argument must make sense.

2) Don’t contradict yourself. This means saying one thing and then saying the opposite later on in the essay — the Examiner will just think you’re confused:

eg The sole reason Macbeth kills Duncan is because he persuades himself it is his destiny. He uses the witches’ prophecy as an excuse — as though he doesn’t have any choice in the matter. This is because he is a weak man — he only murders Duncan when his wife pressurises him.

3) The example says Macbeth only kills Duncan because he thinks it’s his destiny, and then says he only does it because of his wife. This is a contradiction — if both reasons are true then there isn’t one sole reason. The passage makes no sense, so it would lose marks.

4) Keep your argument logical — but don’t be afraid to change your mind. If you realise that your argument is wrong halfway through the essay, don’t panic.

5) Just add a sentence saying that your argument up to that point is one opinion, but that there’s also another. Then explain what’s wrong with your first argument, giving reasons, and continue the essay with your new argument.

Five Major Mistakes to Avoid

1) In literary essays, don’t just tell the story in the text — this is a waste of time and you’ll only get low marks. You need to answer the question and argue in support of your opinion.

2) Don’t digress — stick to the point and answer the question. Don’t start talking about irrelevant points or small details. Essays are about answering questions to get the marks.

3) Don’t change your argument without explaining why to the Examiner. If you don’t explain what you’re doing, it’ll look like you’re contradicting yourself.

4) Don’t generalise — you must give detailed examples to back up what you say. If you’re writing about a text, you must give detailed references to prove your point. Always give more than one example. Never make sweeping statements about an author or a text.

5) Don’t give irrelevant or incorrect examples — you’ll lose marks. You must always explain why you’ve included an example and why it’s relevant to your argument. If it’s a quotation, make sure you know its context — check that it really means what you think it does.

No correct answers — I knew English wasn’t right...

English essays are about how you argue — the secret is learning the right skills, not the answers.

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Balancing Your Argument

We're not finished with the skills of good arguing yet — we need to talk about balancing your argument: giving the views of both sides.

A Balanced Argument Looks at All Sides of the Question

1) Even though there are no correct answers to English essays, there are still lots of wrong answers to avoid.
2) Never forget that your opinion is just one point of view — check it in case you've missed an important detail.
3) You need to think about possible problems with your argument — whether it really makes sense, or whether there is some vital piece of evidence that you've ignored in your essay plan.
4) Discuss these problems in the course of your essay.

How to Write a Balanced Argument

1) You must learn to argue for and against your own answer to the question.
2) Look at the question from a different angle — think about whether you're really answering it, and whether there are any arguments against your own opinion.
3) Some essays ask you to give both sides anyway — arguing for and against, comparing texts, discussing topics. You need to give a balanced argument in all your essays.
4) This doesn't mean writing a bad argument — and it doesn't mean your first argument is useless. The Examiners want to see that you realise there's more than one view about every topic.

Example of a Balanced Argument

In the opening scene of King Lear, Cordelia and Kent are the characters who love Lear most. They refuse to play his games — when the King asks Cordelia what she will say to win a third of the kingdom, she replies "Nothing". When Lear becomes angry and disinherits her, Kent interrupts his King, telling him he is making a mistake. Kent and Cordelia love Lear, which means they are honest with him, and as a result he rejects them.

The problem is that because of this love, Kent is banished and Cordelia disinherit. Neither of them trust Ooneril and Regan, but their banishment leaves Lear in the power of his cruel daughters. This is a strange sort of love. Furthermore, their honesty is like a rejection to Lear. They are the first people in the play to betray Lear. It is actually their love which begins the tragedy.

Comparing and Contrasting in Essays

1) Some essays ask you to compare texts. Read the question carefully to see if it gives any hints. Make a list of similarities and differences between the texts.
2) Each similarity and each difference are points for your essay plan. You should make each point and then give examples from all of the texts in turn.
3) Don't write all about one text first and then about the next one — that's not a proper comparison. You need to show that you've read all the texts closely, and that you can spot the links between them — you're writing about themes and style.
4) Always give plenty of examples for comparisons — the Examiner needs to see the similarities.
5) Comparing texts will help you pick up marks in all essays — even if you're not being asked to do it. A good comparison shows the Examiner that you understand the text, and you'll win marks for linking it to your wider reading — but it must be relevant to answering the question.

No more weight problems — a balanced argument...

Learning to write a balanced argument means looking at things from more than one point of view.

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Examples and Quotation

To pick up the marks, you need to give examples to support your argument — especially in literary essays, where you’ve got to be able to quote from the text.

Giving Examples in Personal Essays

1) It’s easy to forget examples where you’re giving your own opinion — but unless you give them, your essay won’t pick up the marks.
2) Think about examples from your own experience — things that happened to you which are relevant to the question and relevant to your argument.
3) Think about books, films or articles you’ve read that support what you say. If you can, quote the exact words, otherwise just explain what they said. Any context material may be relevant.
4) Always give the source of your example — the name of the book or newspaper, and the date.
5) Never make examples up — you’ll lose marks if you are caught. Once you have given your example, make sure you explain why it’s relevant to the your argument and to the question.

Why You Need to Quote from the Text

1) On the last page we looked at comparisons between texts, but a good essay is also about making comparisons within texts.
2) Your essays need to give examples to prove the points of your argument. They must also show that you’ve read the text carefully and chosen relevant, accurate quotations.
3) That means every time you make a point about a text, you should give a quotation. Never put a quotation in just because you know it — it must be relevant.

A Quotation is a Phrase taken directly from the Text

1) You must quote exactly what the original text says — if you aren’t sure, then put it into your own words. You must say where it came from in the text.
2) Always give a reference for a quotation — for novels give the title, the chapter number and the page number; for poems give the title and the line number; for plays give the title, the Act number and the scene number. The first time you quote from a particular text in an essay, you should also give the author’s name.
3) Make sure you explain who is speaking — if it is a character, then say so.
   If it is the narrator, then say this in your essay.
4) Never quote out of context — look at the passage around the part you want to quote. Don’t use phrases to mean something that they don’t in the original — you’ll lose marks. Check that the phrase really means what you think it does:
   eg. The phrase “I loved her,” is out of context if the original was “I lied when I said I loved her.”

Only Quote Relevant Bits of Text

1) The secret of quoting is choosing short, relevant phrases that are easy to remember.
2) As you read a text, make a list of key quotations. Note the page numbers, to find them again.
3) Keep short quotations as part of your paragraph, and add quotation marks — then give the reference in brackets: eg “Sweet sister, let me live.” (Measure for Measure, Act III, scene i)
4) Leave the spelling and punctuation exactly the same as they are in the original text.
5) Quotations longer than a whole line should be given as a separate paragraph. Leave plenty of space before and after, and don’t use quotation marks.

Better by far that you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.
("Remember", lines 13-14; Christina Rossetti)

The speaker says life should be joyful, even after a loved one dies...

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Essay Style

You must make your essays interesting and clear to read. That means writing plain English so that the Examiner can understand what you’re saying and follow your argument.

Write Clear Sentences in Paragraphs

1) Good essay style means writing in proper sentences — revise P.32.
2) Vary the length of your sentences — don’t just write short sentences or long ones, but a variety of lengths. The important thing is that they’re clear to read.
3) Write in paragraphs. Every time you introduce a new point or a different idea, you must start a new paragraph. Don’t let your paragraphs get too long or your point will become unclear — break them up with relevant quotations.
4) Vary the tone and vocabulary of your essay to keep the Examiner interested.

Don’t Keep Using the Same Vocabulary

1) Try to use plenty of different vocabulary in your essays — the Examiner will get very bored if you keep using the same words over again.
2) Make sure you use words properly — if you’re not sure about the meaning or spelling of a word then think of another way to say it. Just be clear.
3) Begin your sentences in a variety of ways — don’t begin every sentence with “The” or “Then”.
4) Remember the two key rules for using adjectives and adverbs (see P.21) — you must explain why you’ve used them. Avoid using words like “beautiful”, “interesting” or “powerful” when you talk about texts. You must be specific, otherwise the Examiner won’t give you the marks.

The Tone of an Essay Must be Formal

1) Your essay has to prove to the Examiner that you know about the subject and that you can organise material to construct an argument.
2) This means you must use formal language — don’t forget grammar and spelling.
3) You need to be accurate and clear — don’t be chatty.
4) Avoid saying “I” this and “I” that — just talk about the question, the text, the style, the narrator or the characters etc. The Examiners already know that the essay is your opinion. Only talk about yourself in Personal Essays.
5) Make sure your argument is clear — if it seems confusing then give a brief summary of what you’ve said so far, and how it answers the question you were given.
6) Avoid using clichés (see P.2) and vague words, like “nice”, “very”, “lovely” and “pretty”.
7) Watch out for tautology — saying the same thing twice in the same sentence: eg The annual boat race is held every year — annual and every year mean the same thing.
8) Watch your tenses: if you start talking about a text or an author in the past tense, you must stay in the past tense. This is confusing — especially when you talk about characters in a text.

Use these Linking Words to Spice Up Your Essay Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>even</th>
<th>moreover</th>
<th>unless</th>
<th>undoubtedly</th>
<th>not only…but also…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>despite</td>
<td>however</td>
<td>perhaps</td>
<td>without doubt</td>
<td>possibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instead</td>
<td>nevertheless</td>
<td>alternatively</td>
<td>even though</td>
<td>furthermore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essays are like New Labour — a matter of Tone

Phew! There’s a lot to learn on these two pages. If you want to do well in literary essays, you must quote from the text. Make sure you know how to do it properly. Watch the style of your essays too — silly mistakes will cost you marks even if your argument is clear and well-supported.
Concluding Your Essay

Once you’ve made all of your points, you need to close your essay and sum up your answer to the question — you must be focused.

**Summing Up means bringing together the Key Points**

1) Start a new paragraph by looking at the original question again.
2) You need to explain to the Examiner how you have answered the question, restating the main points of your argument briefly.
3) Finish by giving a final example, or explaining why the question is important. Don’t go on and on, though. Once you’ve summed up, just write a final sentence as your conclusion.

**Go Over Your Essay When You’ve Finished**

1) Read through your essay quickly to check that it makes sense, and that it says what you want it to say.
2) Check the grammar, spelling and punctuation. If you find a mistake then cross it out neatly and write the correction above.
3) If a sentence isn’t clear, then cross it out and put an asterisk * beside it. Put another asterisk in the margin beside the sentence, and write what you meant to say in the margin.
4) If a whole paragraph is unclear, you’ll have to write the page out again, and rewrite the paragraph so it is clear. If the new paragraph means that the rest of your argument is wrong, you’ll have to write an new argument — only do this if you’re sure the argument’s wrong.

REMEMBER: planning your argument properly means that you won’t have to rewrite it at the end. Always plan and draft before you start the actual essay.

**Don’t Panic if You Realise Your Argument is Wrong**

1) It’s everybody’s nightmare that they read through an essay and realise that their answer is completely wrong.
2) Sometimes it’s not until you actually start writing that you have your best ideas, so your argument should be flexible.
3) Don’t be afraid to adapt your argument as you go along. Every so often, stop and read what you’ve written up to that point. If it seems to answer the question then keep going.
4) If it doesn’t answer the question then stop writing immediately — work out what the problems with the argument are, then continue your essay, giving the opposite view to what went before.
5) If you realise you’ve forgotten something really obvious and easy, then write a note at the bottom of the final page, explaining what you’ve done — you’ll pick up some marks for realising your mistake. If there’s time, write an extra paragraph at the end of your essay, explaining what your answer to the question should have been and why.
6) Never panic — you’ll have plenty of chances to write more essays for your Coursework folder. Ask if you can rewrite any essays where you made big mistakes — this will help you practise planning your argument and answering the question. Learn from your mistakes.

Always try to answer the question — even if you haven’t got much to say. The Examiners will give you marks for keeping to the point. Never make things up.

**Arguments are like gymnastics — you must be flexible...**

Keep your conclusions to the point, and check your essay so that you don’t make silly mistakes.

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Narrative, Character and Themes

Now we’re going to look at how to write literary essays — how to write about the features of the texts that you’ve read. Spend some time going over Section Five to help you.

Writing about Narrative means Who and What

1) If you’re writing about the narrative of a text or a particular author, you need to focus on who is speaking and what they describe.
2) Asking who’s speaking tells you who the narrator is, and helps you to see the tone and style of the text. Remember that narratives can change their point of view — they can move inside and out of the characters’ heads.
3) Asking what’s being described tells you the plot of the text, and also what the narrator thinks is important. If the narrator is in love with a character, then the narrative may only talk about that character, nothing else.
4) Look for hidden meanings. These can come when the narrator says one thing but means another, or when the tone of the passage makes you feel that the narrator is wrong — eg a passage describes someone being afraid but the narrator seems to enjoy it.
5) These hidden meanings are not stated in the text, but lie under it, so they’re called the subtext.

DON’T FORGET: look out for opinions being presented as facts in the narrative.

Writing about Characters means Looking for Motives

1) All characters in texts have motives — reasons why they do what they do.
2) Your close reading of the text should tell you exactly what each character does. If you’re asked about a character or a group of characters, you need to find evidence in the text which shows you their motives.
3) Look at what they say, and ask yourself whether they’re telling the truth. If they’re lying then you need to look at why.
4) Remember — writing about characters is like a detective story. You have to look for clues to answer your essay question.

The Themes of a Text are What It’s About

1) Concentrate on the themes mentioned in the question. All texts have more than one theme but you’re only being asked about a specific topic. Don’t get sidetracked.
2) You must give examples from the whole text — look at the characters and the narrative.
3) You may want to use context material from other sources — about the author’s life, or perhaps a different text to compare with the subject of your essay.
4) Make sure your context material is relevant — if it isn’t, don’t use it. You must relate your context material back to the text you’re writing about, and back to the question.
5) Some authors talk about the same themes in different texts — it can be useful to compare the views presented, but you must show how they’re related to each other. This is called cross-referencing. All the texts you use must be relevant to the theme you’re writing about.

Always give examples to support your argument — keep them relevant and accurate, especially any context material you use.

Treat texts harshly — they’ll come apart at the themes...

Here are three of the most popular areas you’ll be asked to write essays about. Always be sure that you understand what you have to write about to get the marks — and how to do it.

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Writing about Language

You should always try to mention language in your literary essays—even when the question doesn’t ask about it specifically. The language of a text creates the style and the tone.

You Must Write about How a Text Uses Language

1) The language of a text is the basic tool for creating effects—look back over Section Five to remind yourself.

2) You need to write about the vocabulary of a text—if it’s simple or complicated, and if it gives lots of detail or just the facts.

3) Comment on any changes in the language between different parts of the text. Write about why the language changes like this—what effect or feeling it creates.

4) Sometimes characters in a text will speak in a certain way—you should ask yourself what this tells you about them. This trick is often used when a character is poor or foreign.

5) Sometimes the narrator of a text will mimic the speech of a character, in order to comment on what they’re saying—perhaps to mock them. This mimicry will be part of the narrative and won’t appear in dialogue or quotation marks—see points 6, 7, and 8 in the example below.

6) The only way to spot it is by reading the text carefully to work out how the characters sound when they speak, and how the narrator sounds normally. It takes a lot of practice.

An Example of Writing about Language

One of the characters in Joseph Conrad’s novel Lord Jim, is an Australian called Chester, a dodgy businessman who has tried his hand at “anything and everything a man may be at sea, but a pirate.” This extract tells us several important things about what he is like, just from the language used:

"He’s been having grub with you in the Malabar last night — so I was told."

'I said that it was true, and after remarking that he, too, liked to live well and in style, only that, for the present, he had to be saving of every penny — "none too many for the business! Isn’t that so Captain Robinson?" — he squared his shoulders and stroked his dumpy moustache, while the notorious Robinson, coughing at his side, clung more than ever to the handle of the umbrella, and seemed ready to subside passively into a heap of old bones. "You see, the old chap has all the money," whispered Chester, confidentially."

(Lord Jim, Chapter XIV: Joseph Conrad)

1) The scene is narrated by one of the characters involved, because he uses the first person ("I").

2) The first sentence of the extract is spoken by Chester and contains a grammatical mistake—"He's been having" means that the action has taken place over a long period of time, but Chester uses it with one occasion: "last night". His grammar tells us that he isn't very educated.

3) He uses the short form "he's" instead of "he has", and the slang word for food, "grub". This fits with the fact that he has been a sailor — probably not a very important or high-ranking one.

4) The next sentence is very long, and is spoken by the narrator. He uses a varied vocabulary and describes Captain Robinson with clear, comic image — this means the narrator is educated.

5) Chester remarks that he likes to "live well and in style" — he is saying the same thing twice to make it sound more important (tautology). He's showing off to the narrator.

6) He then gives an excuse for the fact that he isn't living well and in style — the short clauses "only that," and "for the present," make it sound like an excuse because they slow the sentence down.

7) His excuse is that "he had to be saving of every penny." This is another grammatical mistake — this means that it's in Chester's tone of voice and not the narrator's. The narrator mimics him.

8) Then the narrator quotes Chester directly: "none too many for the business! Isn't that so Captain Robinson?" Chester's own words are used because the narrator doesn't believe this excuse — at the end of the passage, Chester tells us he has no money anyway.

9) Captain Robinson doesn't answer the question, but the narrator describes him looking ill. This suggests that Robinson is weak, and Chester only wants his money — which he admits at the end.
Writing about Novels

Novels are long narratives written in prose. Prose is the opposite of poetry — writing which doesn’t have any formal rhythm or pattern. You’ll need to look at themes, style and language.

You Must Write about the Whole Novel

1) A good essay about a novel moves between points about the structure of the novel as a whole, and detailed points about specific passages in the text.
2) For essays on more than one text, compare them as whole novels, then look at the details of specific passages as evidence.

Writing about the Structure of the Novel

1) Writing about the structure of the novel means looking at the effect of the whole book.
2) Look for the different kinds of narrative voice — whether there is one narrator or more, and whether the narrator is a character in the book or a detached observer.
3) Write about the main themes of the book — the ideas that keep coming up in different places.
4) You must make connections — you need to be able to link different parts of the novel which are about the same thing. That means you have to read the text closely and take good notes.
5) You also need to make connections between different novels written by the same author — look at the similarities and differences between the ideas in each: whether they change or not.
6) Sometimes you may have to compare novels by different authors — look at the themes and the general style of the books. Remember to make connections.

DON’T FORGET: you must give examples to support your arguments about the structure of the novel. Write about specific passages in detail as evidence.

Looking at Passages in Detail

1) This means using your comprehension skills — look at Section Four again.
2) You need to read the text closely so that you can explain exactly what effects it creates and what language and tone are used.
3) You’re giving examples to illustrate larger points in the argument, but you’re also showing the Examiner that you’ve read the text and understood it.
4) Remember to ask the six major questions (see Section Five, PP43-44).
   Work out who the narrator is, and what the style of the passage is — for example, a descriptive, narrative or dialogue passage.
5) Look at how the novel involves you in the action — whether you’re told what the characters think or you see them doing things without any explanation.

An Example of Writing about a Specific Passage

It was the last tram. The lank brown horses knew it and shook their bells to the clear night in admonition. The conductor talked with the driver, both nodding often in the green light of the lamp. On the empty seats of the tram were scattered a few coloured tickets. No sound of footsteps came up or down the road. No sound broke the peace of the night save when the lank brown horses rubbed their noses together and shook their bells.

(Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Chapter Two; James Joyce)

The extract describes the silent end of an evening. It describes the emptiness of the tram and the street. We are told there are no sounds in the street except the horses’ bells shaking which give a warning (admonition) that this is the last tram.

The only people mentioned are the conductor and driver of the tram, who are talking. We don’t hear what they say, we just see them nodding. This adds to the feeling of silence.

Writing about Fiction — a novel idea...

Remember — writing about novels means looking at the big picture and giving detailed examples.
Writing about Plays

Writing about plays doesn’t just mean looking at what the characters say, but how they say it and what else they do on stage. Plays were written to be performed, and your essays must take this into account.

Write about How a Play would look Onstage

1) When you read a play, you need to imagine how it would look onstage.
2) Read it out loud or even act the scenes out, using the stage directions.
3) Stage directions are any information that appears in brackets which tells you what the characters are doing, where they should move and how they should say their lines.
4) You need to look at what the characters say, and how they appear to the audience — characters can say something but act in such a way that we don’t believe them.
5) Remember — all the information a play gives about the characters and story must be spoken by the cast onstage. The audience watches what happens and makes up their own mind about how the characters appear — whether they’re heroic, sympathetic or cruel etc.

Dialogue in a play tells us what the characters think about themselves. The way they speak and behave tells us whether they are telling the truth or lying.

Plays use Unrealistic Tricks to make a Picture of Reality

1) Plays try to create a picture of the real world. This can mean lots of unrealistic things happen, like people speaking poetry, music in the background and shifts in time and place.
2) Many plays move backwards and forwards in time — like Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman.
3) Older plays, such as Shakespeare’s works, tend to follow the story from beginning to end. They can cover long periods of time or short periods. Always check the stage directions.
4) Often characters are alone onstage will speak directly to the audience — the fancy name for this is a soliloquy. In these speeches, the character can explain what he or she is thinking.
5) Hamlet and Antony (in Julius Caesar) have soliloquies explaining what they’re going to do. Iago (in Othello) and Richard III tell us they’re lying to the other characters. Talking directly to the audience involves us in the plot — we know things the characters onstage don’t know.
6) Some plays only have one character who tells the whole story — these are called monologues; for example Talking Heads, by Alan Bennett.

Five Key Features to Write About in Plays

1) Look at how the audience is involved in the action — whether you know things that the characters on stage don’t know. This can be comic or tragic.
2) Think about how the play makes you feel — whether it makes you happy, sad or angry.
3) Look at the language — whether the play is written in verse, or the language sounds normal and realistic, or there’s a mixture of styles (like in Shakespeare). Look at the imagery (P.47).
4) Write about what the characters say and how they sound to you — telling the truth or lying.
5) Write about any performance of the play you’ve seen, including films and videos — how it made you feel, and whether you reacted differently when you saw the play from when you read it. Remember, any play you see is only one interpretation — the director has read the play and told the actors to perform each scene a certain way (see PP.88-9 on Drama, P.91 on Reviews).

Learn this Note on Quoting Poetry — in Plays and Verse

When you quote poetry, don’t just run the lines together like prose. If you quote a sentence where the line ends in the middle, draw a vertical slash / to show where one line ends and the next begins: “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow/ Creeps in this petty pace from day to day.” In most poetry each line begins with a capital letter. You must quote it exactly as it is in the original.
**Writing about Poems**

Poetry can be tricky to write about because a lot is said in a small amount of text. That means you have to read it carefully — especially for the language and tone.

**Poetry is about Word Music and Tone**

1) **Begin** by reading the poem through. Ask yourself how it makes you feel.
2) Look at what the question wants you to do — if it’s a comparison or a comprehension exercise then you need to look at everything. Sometimes the question may be specific — on the poet’s use of language, or the main themes, perhaps. Make sure you answer the question.
3) Good poetry doesn’t waste any words, so if you don’t understand any of the words in the poem, look them up in a dictionary. In an Exam, you may have to work out the meaning from the sentence around it — think about a meaning that would make sense in that context.
4) Look for hidden meanings — sometimes the main theme of the poem isn’t mentioned clearly. You need to look at what happens and work out what it means from the tone and the style.

Don’t just write about what happens in the poem in your own words. You won’t get any marks for that — you have to tell the Examiner what it means.

**Older Poems are Easier to Write About**

1) You may think that older poems are harder and more boring, but they’re also much easier to write about. That means you can win higher marks.
2) Older poems often use more poetic language (P.48) and vivid images (P.47).
3) They generally have strong rhythms — so it’s much easier to write about the poet’s style and use of language. See how the rhymes work.
4) The hard part is understanding the tone and some of the vocabulary. This comes with practice. Remember the key points to look for in older texts (see P.50).
5) Modern poems are easier to understand. This can make it difficult to find much to say about them — if they’re very clear then there are no hidden meanings to look for. Just remember to look at the language and the images used. Try to sound interested in what you’re writing about.

**Writing about the Tone of a Poem**

1) The tone of a poem is the mood it creates — it can change between one line and the next. It’s formed by the narrative voice of the poem.
2) Read each sentence carefully until you’ve worked out what it means.
3) Remember, even though a sentence may be on two or more lines of a poem, it’s still a whole sentence that has to make sense by itself.
4) Think about whose point of view the sentence expresses — whether it does make sense, and whether each sentence follows on from the last.
5) Every poem has an argument, just like an essay. If the logic of the argument seems wrong, there could be a hidden meaning in the poem. If the poem contradicts itself, then this is a deliberate trick by the poet — look out for contradictions and write about them.
6) Poems are about feeling — sometimes the emotion of a poem affects the argument. Don’t forget — the feelings expressed in a poem don’t have to be real. Poetry is a form of fiction — even when a poem talks directly to the reader, it uses a poetic voice. It is not the poet talking.

**Writing about poetry — going from bad to verse...**

Writing about poetry can be tough. Learning the rules on this page will help you to write about poetic tone — that’s where most people lose marks. See Section Ten for some revision examples.
Writing Exam Essays

Exam essays are not like Coursework essays — you won’t have as much time and you’ll have to make your argument as clear as possible. If you’re well prepared there’s no reason to panic.

How to Prepare for an Exam Essay

1) Some Exam questions will be about texts you’ve studied during your Course — you’ll know what they are in advance, so read them properly, take notes, learn quotations and practise writing timed essays.
2) For each Exam, find out what you have to do and how long you’ll have to do it. Whenever you practise, time yourself so that you get used to working to a deadline. Remember your comprehension skills (Section Four).
3) See how much you can write within the time limit. That will roughly be the length of your essay in the Exam — make sure you can write a clear argument and you can answer the question in that time.

Always Read the Question Carefully

1) In the Exam you mustn’t panic — read the whole Exam paper through first. Don’t just start writing without thinking.
2) Then read it through again and mark the questions you think you can do.
3) On a piece of rough paper, write down all the quotations you’ve learned.
4) Make sure you read the instructions on the paper carefully — especially the number of questions you have to answer.
5) Work out exactly what the question is asking you to do. Then plan your essay. Don’t write without a plan — it should only take a few minutes to scribble one, and your essay will be clearer for the Examiner to follow.
6) Start with your best point and begin your answer straight away. Don’t waste time with a long and irrelevant introduction.

Never Make Any of these Six Mistakes

1) Never invent things — don’t invent examples or quotations. Even if you don’t know any examples, you’ll get marks for trying to answer the question.
2) Don’t get sidetracked — stick to the point and answer the question.
3) Don’t write without thinking or planning — a good Exam answer isn’t about how much you write, it’s about whether you answer the question clearly.
4) Never learn an essay plan in advance — it won’t answer the Exam question you’re given, and you’ll lose marks for an irrelevant argument.
5) Don’t quote out of context — the Examiner will mark you down because it shows that you haven’t read the text properly.
6) Never cross out your whole essay if you realise it’s wrong — this is just a waste of time. Don’t panic, just think about why the essay is wrong, and continue the essay, explaining to the Examiner why it’s wrong, and if there’s time, what the real answer is. Never give up: even if you only have five minutes left, that’s still time to pick up some extra marks.

I hate Exams — they’re such a testing time...

This is a really important page to learn. Exams terrify people, and that makes them careless. The first things they forget are the basic skills — reading the whole paper through, reading the question carefully, planning their essay and timing it. Just keep calm and answer the question.

Section Seven — Essay Writing Skills
Revision Summary for Section Seven

Another big Section to revise — but don't panic, these questions are here to help. Essay writing is one of the basic skills of English — without it, you'll be lost. Spend some time going over the Section, then look at these questions for some practice. Don't cheat by looking back — see how much you can remember without looking first.

1) What are essays for?
2) What's the biggest mistake that people make in their essays?
3) What should you do when a question doesn't look obvious?
4) What's the most important thing to look at when you read the question?
5) What are the eight great question words?
6) What is each one asking you to do?
7) What should you do if you make a spelling mistake?
8) When are you allowed to write in the margin?
9) If you need more than two asterisks on a page, what's gone wrong, and what should you do about it?
10) What are the six steps to writing a good essay?
11) What should you do if you're not sure what your opinion on the subject is?
12) What should your first point always be?
13) What is drafting? Why bother writing a rough draft?
14) After you've written a page of your draft, what should you do?
15) What does your introduction need to do?
16) What are the four steps to writing a good introduction?
17) What is meant by the argument of an essay?
18) Why must you take care not to contradict yourself in your argument?
19) What are the five big mistakes to avoid?
20) Are there right answers to English essays?
21) Are there wrong answers to English essays?
22) How would you go about writing a balanced argument?
23) How should you compare two texts in an essay?
24) Why do you need to include lots of examples when comparing texts?
25) Do you need to give examples in Personal Essays as well as literary essays?
26) Why do you need to quote from the text?
27) How should you write a quotation that's longer than a whole line?
28) What should you vary in your essays to keep them interesting?
29) Why do you need to be specific and choose the right words?
30) What should the tone of an essay be like?
31) How would you finish your essay?
32) What do you do if you find your essay is completely wrong?
33) What's the key to writing about character?
34) How would you go about writing about the structure of a novel?
35) What evidence should you give when writing about the structure of a whole novel?
36) What are the five key features to write about in plays?
37) Why are older poems easier to write about?
38) How should you prepare for an Exam essay?
39) What are the six big mistakes to avoid in Exam essays?
40) Write an essay on the advantages and disadvantages of school. Remember to plan your essay and give examples to support your points.
Personal Writing

Personal writing means any written work which is about **yourself** and your **opinion**. It can also include any **fictional stories** you write, or **real-life experiences** you write about, as well as your opinions. For personal **essay** work you should also learn the **Essay Writing Skills** in Section Seven.

**Personal Writing Must Always be Clear**

1) When you give your own opinions, you still have to be clear. That means your **punctuation**, **spelling** and **grammar** must be correct. Go over anything you’re unsure about in Section Three.

2) Personal writing can be tested in lots of different forms — we’re going to look at the most **common** ones in this Section. The **secret** of good personal writing is knowing your **audience**.

**You Have to Write in the Right Style**

1) You need to choose the **appropriate style** to use for every piece you write — that means looking carefully at what the question asks you to do.

2) If you asked to write about an **experience** you have had, then you should use a fairly **formal** style, but you should also write about your **feelings** — what it was **like** to be in that situation.

3) If you’re asked to write a **letter**, ask yourself whether it should be **formal** or **informal** — for example, if you’re writing a letter to a **character** in a **play** as a **friend**, you should write an **informal** letter; if you’re writing to the **editor** of a **newspaper** you should write formally.

4) Some personal writing questions ask you to imagine you’re in **contact** with a **character** from a **book** or a **play**, or to imagine yourself in the same **situation**. You need to think about **how** the characters **talk**, and try to write in a **similar style**.

5) Sometimes you may be asked to write a **different ending** to a **novel**, or to write a **short story** with the same **characters**. This means you need to know about the **style** of the original book, and try to write in a **similar way**. The Examiner will give you **marks** based on how well you write in that **style** as well as for how **relevant** and **interesting** your story is.

Choosing the right style means knowing your audience — using the right vocabulary, explaining difficult ideas clearly and keeping people’s attention.

**Five Elements of Style to Watch Out For**

1) **LANGUAGE**: make sure your readers understand what you’re writing about — especially if you’re describing something **technical**, like **sport** or a **hobby**.

2) **VOCABULARY**: use a **variety** of words and don’t **repeat** yourself if you can avoid it — make sure you use new vocabulary correctly.

3) **TONE**: keep the reader interested by varying the **tone** of your writing — try using some **fiction** and **non-fiction** techniques (see next page).

4) **HUMOUR**: be careful with jokes — they’re a **good** way to keep people reading, but think about whether they’ll **offend** anyone. If they’re **not** funny to the Examiner, you could **lose** marks — so **think** before you make a joke.

5) **OPINION**: if you give an **opinion** you should try to **support** it, even in a **descriptive** essay. The Examiner doesn’t just want to know **how** you **felt**, but **why** you felt that way too. Try to **explain** it clearly.

**Personal writing — a lonely hearts ad, perhaps...**

Personal writing sounds easy — it’s only writing about yourself. Unfortunately, that’s why most people do it **badly** and throw away lots of **easy marks**. You have to write your personal pieces just as carefully as your essays. Learn the **five elements of style** off by heart.
Rhetoric

Rhetoric means persuasive language — the way you use words to argue a case, especially exaggerated language. It’s a key skill in personal writing — you can also use it in essays too but you must be careful not to say things if there’s no evidence to back them up.

You Can Persuade People Using Rhetoric

1) Rhetoric is one of the main tricks used in fiction and non-fiction texts to cause a reaction (revise the top five tricks on P53).
2) You can use it in your writing to argue a point, or to encourage a reaction in the reader. It will show your opinion — your bias.
3) You can also use it in public speaking — in debates or speeches. Politicians and journalists use rhetoric to make their points sound more important than they really are.
4) One trick is to exaggerate feelings when you describe them: for example, journalists will say things like “His career is finished,” or “This result is the end of the world” for Welsh football.” They don’t literally mean this — they’re using over-the-top language to make the reader react.
5) Another trick is to use lots of questions without giving the answers. This invites your reader to accept what you say and agree with you, as though they couldn’t possibly disagree.
6) You can also repeat words and phrases to emphasise them for the reader.
7) You can also attack the opposite view to your own, by making jokes about how wrong they are, or by finding an extreme example of that view in order to outrage your audience.
8) Good rhetoric will often give a slogan — or soundbite — which is easy to remember and makes a key point. It can encourage people to do something.
9) One of the cleverest tricks is to identify yourself with your audience — when you write about your reactions use “we” and “us”. This encourages the audience to agree with your view.

Two Examples of Writing Using Rhetoric

Look closely at these texts — see how many rhetorical tricks you can spot in them.

We have all heard what the Environmental protesters say. They’re concerned that more roads mean the destruction of more of the countryside, and the destruction of more plant and animal life. These are the same protesters who walk out in front of drivers on busy motorways, causing terrible accidents, risking their own safety and the safety of other people. These are the same protesters who talk about their concern for life. That doesn’t sound much of a concern for life, does it? If they were really concerned about life they wouldn’t endanger the lives of innocent drivers, would they?

The road builders talk about reducing the amount of traffic in towns by building roads in the countryside. They talk about reducing exhaust emissions into the air of our towns for the sake of our children. They seem to ignore the fact that it was their roads which caused these problems in the first place. Can’t they see that building more roads is not a solution? In ten years time they’ll still have to build more. It’s time to take a stand, to stop the road builders and ask the government to look for a real and permanent solution — improving public transport and reducing the number of cars on the road by raising taxes. Let’s be cruel to our wallets to be kind to the planet.

Rhetorical language — I don’t believe it...

Rhetoric is a really useful trick to practise for your personal writing. Remember — it’s about persuading the Examiner to agree with you — and to give you high marks for your writing.
Writing about Experiences

Writing about experiences means trying to put down on paper a particular moment in your life when you felt a certain feeling, or something specific happened to you.

Answer the Question You're Given

1) Most experience pieces come with some sort of guideline question: for example, Write about a time when you were jealous.
2) These questions could come up as Coursework pieces after you've been reading a text in class, or part of a comprehension exercise in your Exam.
3) Start by looking at any texts you were given — for ideas about what you have to describe, and the feelings you need to capture in your writing.
4) Think about your experiences and try to come up with one where you felt the emotion in the question, or the same thing happened to you.
5) If you can't think of anything, then think of something as near as possible to what the question asks for. You must only do this if you can't think of anything else at all.
6) Start your piece by explaining why your experience is relevant to the question: for example, "I remember the first time I was jealous of my brother."
7) If your experience isn't exactly the same then say so immediately, but explain why your experience is similar and relevant: for example, "Although I have never really been jealous, I used to worry a lot about trusting my cousin, which was similar in some ways."

REMEMBER: you must make your experience relevant to the question — and interesting for the Examiner to read. Think about the tone and the style.

Good Style and Tone will Win You High Marks

1) Even though this is a personal piece, the style of your writing is a major factor in how good a mark you get.
2) You need to make the experience come alive for the Examiner — that means describing it accurately and interestingly.
3) It also means varying the style — the length of sentences you use, putting in dialogue as well as description and using lots of different vocabulary.
4) You'll need to vary the tone — use the text to make the Examiner feel what you felt, make it funny, sad or frightening.

Start off by Grabbing the Examiner's Attention

1) You need to make an immediate impression on the Examiner — showing that you're writing a relevant answer to the question, and making your piece sound interesting so the Examiner keeps reading.
2) This sounds tricky, especially if you think the experience is boring but you can't think of anything else. Don't panic — the style and tone you use can make even a boring piece sound interesting.
3) Don't tell the Examiner everything about the experience right away — just give a hint to show that it's relevant to the question and to make the Examiner want to read on: for example, "My first experience of jealousy left me with five stitches and a broken heart."
4) You need to make the Examiner ask the question "why?" If they're curious, they'll want to read on to see what happens in the piece.

Personal writing — it can be a fun experience...

If you learn the main points on these pages, you can really improve your personal writing marks.
Descriptive Writing

After grabbing the Examiner's attention, you need to keep it — this means varying your style and tone, especially in your descriptive writing.

Descriptive Writing means Saying What's Going On

1) Good descriptive writing makes a scene come to life — it doesn't mean you have to describe everything you can think about.
2) You need to give the Examiner enough information to explain what is happening and who is involved, but keep your story moving too.
3) You should also try to set the scene — you could describe the weather, the light, the colour of things, smells and sounds.
4) You must try to describe your feelings — this is what the piece is about. It's not just what happened, but how it made you feel. The piece isn't just a report of the facts — it's also about your opinion of them.

You Can Give Two Sorts of Opinion

1) You can describe your opinion at the time — what it was like to be there, how you felt, whether you were afraid or excited. Try to imagine yourself back in the same situation:

   I hid from the fisherman in the grass by the river. The ground was cold and wet and my t-shirt was soon soaking. I was scared I couldn't breathe. Then I saw him. He was coming towards me, red-faced with anger. I didn't dare make a sound, but I could hear my heart beating louder. I was sure that if the fisherman came any closer, he would hear it too...

2) You can describe your opinion now, looking back at the experience — whether you're embarrassed at what you did or glad that you did it, and what you learned from it:

   Looking back, I still feel a tingle of fright when I think about that fisherman with his knife. Anything could have happened. At the same time, I'm proud that I threw the fish back. It was such a big, powerful thing in the water, with its fins flashing silver-yellow as it swam. I couldn't let it die helpless, flapping desperately on a riverbank before ending up on that smug fisherman's dinner plate.

Practise Descriptions Using Your Senses

1) The key to description is using your senses. Think about the sounds you hear, the things you see, what things are like to touch and taste, and how they smell.
2) Use these senses to write a paragraph describing the room you're in right now. Try to describe as many things as you can. Don't repeat yourself.
3) You should also try to use comparisons — look at P.47 on imagery. Try to think of your own images instead of ones you've read in books. Never use clichés (P.2).
4) Remember your adjectives and adverbs — use them to express how things made you feel: for example, "He was a beautiful, sleek, black cat."
5) Don't overuse words like "beautiful" or "interesting" in your writing — you must explain why the things you're describing were beautiful or interesting. Never use the word "nice" — it doesn't mean anything. Think of adjectives that give a clear picture of what you're describing.

Good jokes — I can't possibly describe them...

You'll definitely pick up marks for writing about your experiences if you can describe them clearly. Don't forget your adjectives and comparisons, and practise descriptions using the five senses.

Section Eight — Personal Writing Skills
More on Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing is also about how you use language to create mood and tone — making the atmosphere of your experience come to life.

Adjectives and Images Can Affect the Mood

1) If you want to write about a happy experience then you should choose the right kind of language. Use images of colours and brightness, or spring and summer. You can also describe happy events — parties and celebrations, for example.

2) If you're writing about a depressing experience, then use images of cold and darkness. Any images of loneliness will also help to create the right tone.

Three Ways of Describing People

1) Describe their features — the shape of their head and their nose; the colour of their skin; the shape and size of their body; whether they are good-looking or ugly; even their clothes.

2) Describe the way they act — how they walk and talk; whether they seem confident, friendly and charming, or cold and cruel; whether they have any annoying habits like running through their hair or picking their nose etc.

3) Use an image to describe them — think of something that they remind you of: a busy man could be like a steam engine; a fat man exercising could be bouncing like a giant beach ball.

Images can be funny or serious, and it takes practice to think of them. The secret is using your imagination — and reading different styles of text.

Use Sentence Structure and Language to Create Tone

1) If you want to create a tone of suspense, use short, sharp sentences which just explain one fact at a time — try to delay any explanation as long as possible (like The X Files). Don't give too much information away. The Examiner will keep reading to see what happens:

The moonlit field was strangely quiet. Suddenly the light disappeared, blocked by a shadow. The field went dark for an instant. An owl hooted like a ghost. Inside the farmhouse, the sleeping girl shivered. The front door creaked. She woke with a start and looked about her. The house was silent. She lay down again, relieved.

Creak, went the stair. She opened one eye. Creak, creak. She jumped out and hid behind the bed. Clump went the landing. Clump clump. She shivered again, this time in fear. The door began to open and she screamed. "What's wrong, Mary?" said her father.

2) The example above describes something boring — Mary's father coming home to see his daughter — but it delays revealing this until the end of the passage, making the story exciting.

3) It sets the scene in the style of a horror story, which makes the reader think that they know what's going to happen — that someone is going to attack Mary.

4) This means the reader is surprised. Good suspense writing should try to surprise the reader — be careful not to give any clues away, but make sure that the surprise makes sense.

5) Practise this technique — describe something one way when it's actually something different.

Keep the Examiner reading — without bribery...

More important techniques for you to learn — but you must practise using them. Start by writing descriptions of two people you know. Try to make one description funny and the other one serious. Then write a quick paragraph about your last birthday — in the style of a detective story.
Writing Dialogue

Dialogue is any part of the text which is actually spoken by one of the characters in it. You can use it as a change from descriptive writing — letting the characters speak for themselves.

Dialogue Must Be Presented Clearly

1) Every time a new character speaks you should start a new line.
2) You must use double quotation marks to show where the speech begins and ends. Remember the rules for quotation marks (see P.29).
3) Try to make your dialogue dramatic to read by varying it — you can split a sentence in two in order to delay a revelation:

“The murderer,” said Holmes, “was you, Watson! It’s more dramatic than “The murderer was you, Watson!” said Holmes.

DON’T use the word “said” all the time — think of other words like “answered”, “replied”, “asked”, “wondered”, “complained”, “shouted”, “moaned” etc.

Dialogue Should be Realistic and Create Character

1) Any dialogue you write has to sound like real speech.
2) When you’re writing about a person, think about the way they speak — if there are certain phrases they use all the time, or they have a problem like a stammer or a lisp.
3) Try to use these features when you write dialogue for that person — this will bring them to life and can sometimes be very funny: “There’s a problem,” whispered June. “I’ve got a lisp.”
4) In dialogue you can use clichés and jargon to show the Examiner the way that a character speaks — but don’t use them in your descriptive writing at all.
5) When you read texts, look at the way that the characters speak — if their speech is written in an interesting or clever way, try using it for the dialogue of one of your characters.

For example, in Richard Sheridan’s play The Rivals there is a character called Mrs Malaprop who is very famous for muddling her words. This means she often says one thing when she means something else — “He is the very pineapple of politeness” (Act III, scene ii) when she means pinnacle. Muddling words in this way is called malapropism, after the character.

You Can Use Dialogue to Comment on What Happens

1) Dialogue can be used to give a character’s opinion — to let them comment on what happens.
2) This means you have to put yourself into the mind of the character — imagine what they think as well as how they speak. If a character is a farmer, think about what kind of things a farmer would talk about — like the weather, the price of sheep etc.
3) Keep the comments relevant to the rest of the piece — if you write about being rescued by a lifeboat, you could have a lifeboat man saying, “That was a lucky escape!”

Realistic dialogue — the talk of the town...

Any dialogue you write must sound realistic and give some idea of what the speaker is like. Think about how old they are and what kind of words they would use — they should say what they feel.
Writing Stories

Some people find this incredibly hard — they can never think of anything interesting to write about. Don’t panic though — writing stories means using the same techniques you use for writing about your experiences.

Stories Use Descriptive Writing and Dialogue too

1) Good news — this Section has already covered most of the key techniques you need for writing stories.
2) There’s one big difference, though — in a story you don’t have to write about something that really happened.
3) This means you can use your imagination — which can be great, but it can also be difficult if you can’t think of anything.
4) The secret to story writing is finding a good plot.

Finding a Plot and Using it to Write

1) Plots are the basic outlines of what happens in a story.
2) You’ll need to decide on a plot and the characters — this will help you decide how long the story is going to be before you start.
3) Lots of people write bad stories because they choose a plot which takes too long to write, so they get bored and end the story quickly. You’ll lose marks for this, because the Examiner will see that you’ve rushed the ending.
4) You don’t have to be original. There’s no such thing as an original story. Every story you know in books or films is based on something else — often a mixture of different stories.
5) Look at some stories you like — think about the main events that happen. Then think about the characters and try to change them. You could write a story like a James Bond adventure with a girl as the main character, or a horror story about a statue coming to life.
6) Don’t just copy — you’ll lose lots of marks if the Examiner can see that you’ve copied the story of a film without changing it in any way. You need to take the outline of the plot and then write your own story, in your own style to win yourself high marks.

Choose a Simple Plot and Write the Story Your Way

1) When choosing a plot, think about how long your piece needs to be, and how much time you’ve got to write it. Don’t try to write an entire novel.
2) Think about the style of the piece — you could write in the style of a news report, or give a football commentary on a battle between two alien spaceships. Make sure you keep to the same style — don’t change style unless you make it clear to the Examiner.
3) You must use the right kind of language for the style you choose. If it’s a news report then it should sound like one — the same is true whether it’s a horror story or an adventure.
4) Think about the atmosphere you want to create — how you want the Examiner to feel reading the story. Use the techniques of descriptive language and dialogue to create the tone of the story and to bring the characters to life (revise the last four pages if you’re unsure).
5) Use your own experiences if you can’t think of anything else — you can change the names and the details. This can help you to write about the characters’ feelings.

Guy Fawkes liked stories — he loved a good plot...

You can use your descriptive writing and dialogue skills for writing stories too — with the right plot.

Section Eight — Personal Writing Skills
More on Story Writing

Here are several more important points to consider when you write stories. Remember — writing good stories takes just as much effort and practice as writing good essays.

Choose a Voice for Your Narrator
1) Your story has to have a narrator — someone to tell the tale.
2) You need to decide if the narrator is a character in the story.
3) If the narrator is a character, then write as if you are that character — this is a first person narrative, using "I" and "we".
4) A first person narrative is like a personal experience piece. You'll need to talk about how you felt at the time, and give your opinion on what happens. Look over the last four pages to remind yourself of the skills you'll need to use.
5) Alternatively, you can use a third person narrative. This means describing the characters as "he" and "they". You'll need to write about what they think and feel, not just what happens.
6) Remember — once you've chosen a narrator, you must stay in the same voice. Don't change the style of writing or the Examiner will think you've forgotten who the narrator is.

Start in the Middle and then Set the Scene
1) The best stories start right in the middle of the action — they make you want to read on.
2) You need to be direct — you can use dialogue to do this: "Don't jump!" shouted the soldier.
3) Don't start off the same way all the time — try to use different tricks in different stories.
4) The tone and style of the story are fixed by your first sentence — you need to let the Examiner know that you're in control of the story and you're deliberately writing in a certain style to create a particular tone.
5) Give the Examiner the key information to work out what's going on. That doesn't mean explaining everything, but you must explain enough so that it's clear what is happening.
6) You could set the scene by inventing a source for the story.

What to Put In and What to Leave Out
1) You can't describe absolutely everything that happens. That means you must keep your descriptions relevant to the story as a whole.
2) Think about the outline of your story — and focus on what's going to happen next.
3) Ask yourself what the Examiner needs to know to understand the story, and what's irrelevant.
4) Think about the style of your piece. If it's in the style of a travel piece, then you can add lots of description and detail. If it's a detective story then don't give too much description — you don't want to give away any clues as to who the murderer really is.

End Your Story Properly — Before You Run Out of Ideas
1) Plan the end of your story before you start writing — this outline will help you decide which information is relevant or irrelevant for your descriptions and dialogue.
2) Don't get sidetracked and forget your plot — you'll lose marks if the Examiner can't follow the story because you're busy describing things. You'll lose marks if you don't describe anything.
3) You must tie up the whole plot at the end — don't leave anything hanging. Never end a story by saying, "Then I woke up — it had all been a dream." Examiners hate that ending.

A sad autobiography — the story of my life, I suppose...
Beginning and ending properly will win you marks. Don't just make your story up as you go along.
Writing Drama

The Syllabuses allow you to write some personal pieces of Coursework as drama. Be careful, though — this isn’t easy as it sounds. The Examiners will be extra strict when they mark a piece of drama.

**Drama Writing Must Have a Clear Purpose**

1) You may be given a question which asks you to write a piece of drama on a subject, or to write a new scene using characters from a well-known play.
2) Don’t worry — you don’t have to write an entire play. The Examiners want to see what you know about drama, and whether you can write a dramatic scene.
3) Drama is about writing good dialogue so that when it’s spoken onstage, the audience will believe in the characters and the scene.
4) Drama can be realistic or unrealistic — see P.76.

**How to Write a Drama Script**

1) The script is made up of the dialogue and the stage directions. Stage directions are notes written in brackets, telling the actors how to perform the play. They’re not spoken at all.
2) All plays are divided into Acts, which contain scenes — a scene is a short piece of continuous action. Whenever the play moves on in time, the scene changes. An Act is a major division between different sections of the play. Stage directions give the Act and scene numbers.
3) Stage directions set the scene — they tell the reader where and when the scene happens and who is involved. They can give brief description of any costumes or props a character needs.
4) Stage directions explain who comes onstage and when they do it. They can also say how the person is supposed to behave — angry, sad, drunk etc — and how they should say their lines.
5) The stage directions must be relevant to the scene. You write them to tell the actors what to do, where to move and how to behave. Don’t put in any irrelevant information.

**The Dialogue Tells the Story**

1) In a piece of drama, the only information which the audience are given is what they see and hear onstage.
2) The dialogue and the acting must tell the story and create the characters.
3) Think about how each character speaks — how old they are, what kind of language they use and what mood they’re in.
4) Work out how many characters appear in the scene, and what each one is like — you need to use the dialogue to bring them to life.
5) Vary the emotions of the characters — for example, make one happy and the other sad.
6) During the course of a scene the characters’ emotions may change, reacting to what happens.
7) Make the dialogue interesting — ordinary conversations can be very boring. Try writing an argument scene, or a scene when someone is told some bad news. Remember, the characters need to react to anything which is said.
8) Think about the style of the piece — if you’re writing about characters from a famous play, don’t change their personalities. Try to write in the same style as the original. Examiners could use these questions to test how well you’ve read the text.

**My Mother wanted me on the Stage — leaving town...**

Writing dramatic scenes is an optional exercise, but if you do it well you can pick up lots of marks. Thinking about stage directions and dialogue will also help you to improve your play-reading skills.

Section Eight — Personal Writing Skills
More on Writing Drama

Now you need to learn about how to present your drama scene and bring it to life.

Laying Out a Drama Scene

1) Start by writing the Title of the piece, and the Act and scene number. If you're just writing a scene on its own, then call it Scene One.

2) Then write the stage directions — begin with where the action happens and when, then describe who is onstage at the start as well as any props which need to be there (like a table or a bed).

3) Remember the rules about what information needs to go in the stage directions — but don't waste time putting in irrelevant details.

4) Make sure it's clear to the Examiner what's going on. You must imagine that you're writing for the scene to be performed — give a direction for when the theatre lights should come on.

5) Then write the name of the first character to speak, and then the first piece of dialogue. Each time a new character speaks, write their name on a new line and then add the dialogue.

6) Whenever a character needs to do something in the scene, put in a stage direction. You can write this in the middle of the dialogue, so that the actor will do it at the right time.

7) If a new character enters you need to give a cue — this means a stage direction which tells them when to come onstage. If a character leaves the stage, they also need to have a cue.

8) When the scene is finished, you must write a final stage direction saying what any character left onstage should be doing as the lights fade. When the lights fade, write "End of Scene".

An Example of a Drama Piece

The Card Game Scene One

(The story takes place in California during the Klondike Gold Rush. Mickey is sitting at a round table dealing cards to himself. He is a big man who laughs a lot. Beside him is Josh. Josh is a small, sinister man dressed in black. Every few minutes he coughs into a big handkerchief. Lights up.)

Mickey - It's gonna be a fine game! He won't know what's hit him!
Josh - Shut up and keep practising. (He coughs into his handkerchief. Mickey looks up at him)
Mickey - Say... You ought to see a Doctor about that cough.
Josh - (wheezing from the effort of coughing) After the game... (He coughs again).
(Enter Walker. He is a smartly dressed man with a small moustache)
Walker - Coughing again Mr Hamilton? You really should see a Doctor. Good evening, Mr O'Brien. Tell me, are you ready to lose more of your money tonight?
Josh - (under his breath) Not this time!
Walker - I beg your pardon?
Mickey - He said "Like last time."

Think about How it Would Look Onstage

1) Make sure that you think about how the play would appear onstage. Don't just have characters sitting around — give them things to do, make them move around the stage.

2) Remember that the dialogue should sound like real speech. Try saying it to yourself until it sounds natural. Don't forget that you can use rhetoric, though. Look back at R8. See if you can bring the scene to life with an argument, or one character persuading another.

Writing Drama — getting your act together...

Learn the rules for presenting drama — look at the example too. Think how it would look onstage.

Section Eight — Personal Writing Skills
Writing Responses to Texts

These writing exercises are very popular with Examiners at the moment. You have to read a text and then write about it as if you were one of the characters, or as if you were giving them advice.

Writing as a Character from a Text

1) The secret of this exercise is imagining what it's like to be the character.
2) You need to think about what the character is like — how they speak, how they act, what kind of language they use, whether they're good or unpleasant people.
3) The only way to find these things out is to read the text carefully (see Section Five).
4) These features will help you decide what the character's point of view is.
5) When you've decided this, you must answer any question in the way that you think the character would. You should also try to use the same style of speaking.

Giving Advice to a Character from a Text

1) You need to choose the right style for your answer — read the question carefully.
2) It should tell you who you are supposed to be and what style to write in.
3) Who you are will tell you what relationship you have to the character — whether you're a friend or a relative and can therefore write informally; or whether you're a journalist or a police officer and have to remain formal.
4) You could be asked to write several different styles of answer — letters, diary entries, news reports, etc. Make sure you write in the style you're supposed to.
5) Think about the language you use — the tone and style of it. If you're writing a newspaper report, think about how journalists write (see P.92). If you use the right style then you'll pick up plenty of marks.
6) Remember to answer the question — only give advice about the things you're asked to: for example, if you're asked to write to Juliet to advise her to stop seeing Romeo, don't give her advice on the best new music in the shops.

Use your imagination — talk about the characters as though they're real people. The more imaginative you are at bringing texts to life, the more marks you'll win.

Writing an Additional Piece for a Text

1) This is a much less common exercise but it's still an important one to practise.
2) You may be asked to write another scene for a play, or a passage from a novel.
3) This means you have to look at the characters and the style of the text.
4) You're trying to make your piece as similar as possible to the original.
5) Never invent things as a joke — don't put alien invaders in a scene from Shakespeare. The Examiner won't find it as funny as you do.

Writing as a Play Director

1) The director of a play is the person who brings the text to life for a performance. The director interprets the play and decides how the actors should move and speak onstage.
2) A popular exam question is to ask you how you would direct a scene from a play. This means you need to explain where you would have the actors standing, how they would behave, and what kind of emotion they would use when they said their lines. You'll need to practise this.

Give advice to characters — go on, be an Agony Aunt...

Writing in response to texts means careful reading first, and using your imagination in your answer.

Section Eight — Personal Writing Skills
Writing Reviews

A review is a short essay which tells you what a book, film or theatre performance was like. It should talk about the themes and the presentation and give an opinion on the whole thing.

Start a Review with a Brief Description

1) The first step in a review is to explain what you’re reviewing.
2) You need to explain to your reader what the title is and what kind of book, film or play it is.
3) For a theatrical performance, you should also say when and where you saw it.
4) Don’t explain the entire story — just give an outline so that anyone reading the review will understand what you’re talking about, even if they haven’t seen the film/play, or read the book.

Last Thursday I saw the new production of Chekhov’s Three Sisters at the Strand Theatre in London. The play is about how the lives of three sisters have become trapped by circumstances. They all want to escape from their real lives — they all talk about leaving the small town they live in and going to Moscow — but they are unable to do anything about it. This makes the play very tragic and very funny.

A Theatre Review Tells You About the Performance

1) Writing a theatre review means talking about the performance you saw.
2) Start by making general comments about how the director has chosen to present the play — many old plays by Jonson or Shakespeare are sometimes performed in modern costumes.
3) Write about the set — some plays have a large set with lots of scene changes, other plays have no set and the actors mine all the props.
4) Look at costumes, music and lighting. These things are all part of the experience of going to the theatre. Music and lighting can change the way we feel about a character or a scene.
5) Write about the acting — whether it was good or bad — particularly if there was a very good performance by one actor. Remember to explain why you thought it was good.
6) Give opinions on how the performance went — whether it was exciting or too slow, whether you could hear the actors properly. Always give reasons for your opinions.
7) Finish by summing up the strengths and weaknesses of the performance and give a final opinion on whether you would recommend the production to other people. Ask yourself whether you believed in the characters and the story — if you didn’t, then explain why not.

Book and Film Reviews Explain What the Work is Like

1) Book reviews should look at the style of the book and whether it’s a good story. You should also write about whether it’s easy to read or dull, and whether or not you enjoyed it. You must give reasons for your opinions, like a short essay.
2) Film reviews look at the style and story, but they also look at the acting, the music and the images of the film — whether it’s an epic film with lots of characters and dramatic scenes, or it’s a low budget film with a few actors.
3) You can use any facts you know about the context of a book or film in your review. Make sure they’re relevant though (to remind yourself what context is, look at PP.45-46).

Book, Film and Theatre reviews — what’re they like...

This is definitely something you’ll have to do for your Coursework. Remember — reviews are just like short essays. You need to talk about style, tone and language — and then give your opinion on whether you liked it or not. Don’t forget to give reasons for your opinions, though.
Writing Reports

A report is an account of a particular subject — a description of the facts. You may be asked to write reports about events you’ve been to for your coursework.

A Report Concentrates on the Facts

1) The most common kinds of reports are news reports, sports reports, weather reports, business reports and government reports.
2) The difference between a report and a review is that a review is about giving an opinion, a report is about giving the facts of an event or a situation.
3) Reports are also about description — you need to describe what the event or the situation is like: for example, a business report about a proposed new type of car needs to describe what the car would be like, and look at the advantages and disadvantages it might have.

Description can bring a Report to Life

1) A good report will give the reader a feeling of what the situation is like: a news reporter tries to give a sense of what it’s like to be on the scene — what’s happening and why.
2) The secret of good reporting is good descriptive writing (see PR.83-84).

Why You Need to Practise Writing Reports

Daily Stuff and Nonsense

Man Gives Birth To Gas Fire Shocker!

Dave Smith, 30, from Hull, said “They thought it was odd from the Ultramatic.”

1) You may have to write a report about an event at school, or about a sports match that you went to.
2) You may also have to write reports in the style of a newspaper as an exercise in writing responses to texts (see P.90).

How to Write a Good Report

1) Describe the facts carefully. Try not to be biased but explain exactly what happened, and if you can, why.
2) Describe the scene — think about the six major questions from Section Five (PR.43-44): what happened, where and when it took place, who was involved, how it happened and why.
3) If you can answer all these questions you’ll write a clear report — make sure it’s as accurate as possible by checking it through.

Example of a Sports Report

League-leaders United were deservedly beaten in the cup last night by non-league minnows Beanthwaite Rangers.

Rangers took a shock early lead after two minutes when pacy left-winger Wensley stepped inside his marker and hit a low cross to the front post for striker Daley to tap in.

Things were soon back to normal for United fans though, as former England star David Buckingham was brought down roughly after the restart.

Buckingham got up to score a scorching free kick from just over the half-way line, leaving Rangers’ keeper “Big” Little with no chance.

At one-all the game became scrappy, with Rangers’ players harrying United into making basic mistakes. No clear opportunities were made by either side, until a stunning forty yard run from Daley brought the winning goal. Ecstatic Beanthwaite boss Chris Digby praised his players: “They were immense. Winners all the way.”

Beanthwaite go on to meet cup holders Aspinall in the next round. Meanwhile United will really have to pull themselves together before Wednesday’s crucial European tie with Zaron Belgravia. Manager Harrison must be worried.
Writing Letters

Letter writing is a **skill** you'll need to **practise** for **everyday life** as well as for your **coursework**. There are **two** main kinds of letter — **formal** and **informal** — and **formal** letters have **strict rules** of presentation.

**Learn these Seven Rules for Formal Letters**

1) Write your **name** and **address** in the **right-hand corner** of the page, then **leave** a line and put the **full date** underneath — **day, month, year**.
2) Then write the **name** and **address** of the person you're **writing to** on the **left-hand side** and leave a line.
3) Underneath this write, "Dear Sir or Madam," if you **don't** know the person to whom you're writing, or, "Dear Mr..." or "Dear Ms..." with the person's **name** — eg Dear Ms Jones. Dear Mr Peters, etc.
4) Then write a sentence explaining **why** you're writing the letter: eg **Re: Application for a Bank Loan**
5) Start the letter using **formal language** — explain **clearly** and in **detail** your **reasons** for writing.
6) Leave a **line** of space between each **paragraph**, and **don't** let the paragraphs become too **long**.
7) **Close** the letter properly — if you **know** the person's **name** write "Yours sincerely"; if you **began** with "Sir"/"Madam" you must use "Yours faithfully". Print your **name** then **sign** above it.

**An Example of a Formal Letter**

```
recipient's name and address

William Shakespeare
Anne Hathaway's Cottage
Stratford-upon-Avon

Dear Mr Shakespeare,

Re: Unpaid tax bills

It has come to our attention that you have not paid any income tax for the past 389 years, despite the sizeable royalties you must be receiving from the success of your plays.

I am hereby notifying you that payment is due within the next month. Please find enclosed a bill for the exact amount owed. Should you fail to pay, the Inland Revenue Office will be forced into legal action. Non-payment is a criminal offence.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,

Yours sincerely,

Ivor Drudge
Tax Inspector
```

**Informal Letters Don’t Have Strict Rules**

**Informal** letters are letters to **friends** and **family**. You **don't** have to give a **full** address, just the **date**. Call the person by their **first name** and use **informal endings**, like "love" or "best wishes".

**Look for a letter-writing job — good post to have...**

Writing **formal letters** is easy if you learn the **seven rules**. You may have to write letters in your **Exam**, giving advice to **characters** from literary texts. Practise writing **formal** and **informal** letters.
Presenting Your Work

Presentation is a major factor in picking up good marks — whether in essay work or personal writing pieces. Examiners will give higher marks to neat work which is easy to read.

How to Structure Your Page

1) Structuring your page means using a clear layout so that the Examiner can read your piece clearly and in the right order.

2) Start by writing out the number of the question in the margin. Then write out the question in full, or give the title of the essay or piece.

3) Leave a blank line and begin to write the piece. Only begin writing after you have planned what your answer is first. Most messy pieces of writing are badly planned.

4) If you’re not sure about your plan then write a draft version of the piece. Then you can check it for mistakes before you write the final version.

5) Try to write as clearly as you can, without rushing. If you rush, you’re more likely to make mistakes and you’ll have to cross things out. You could also smudge the ink by rushing.

REMEMBER: write out neat versions of all the pieces in your final Coursework folder before the deadline. Then you won’t lose any marks for presentation.

Avoid Any Grammar, Spelling or Punctuation Errors

1) Any mistakes in these areas will automatically lose you marks, no matter how good the content of your written work is.

2) These errors can be avoided if you’re careful, and if you make sure you know the rules in Section Three. Learn the list of words on P.108.

3) Practise any areas where you know you’re weak — the mistakes you make regularly. If you don’t learn to avoid them, then they could seriously affect your marks — so spend some time working on them right now.

Cross Out Mistakes Neatly

1) This is one of the worst mistakes you can make in presentation.

2) Never scribble all over a mistake or spend ages crossing it out — because it’ll make the page look messy straight away. In fact, the Examiner’s attention will be drawn to the mistake.

3) When you cross out a mistake, you want the examiner to ignore it and carry on reading what you’ve written instead.

4) Put brackets around the mistake and draw two horizontal lines through the word or phrase. This will make it clear that you want the Examiner to ignore it. Don’t draw crosses over everything.

Read the Instructions for Presentation Tips

1) This is a stupid thing to lose marks for, but people do it every year.

2) Before you begin an Exam, read the instructions carefully to see if they mention presentation.

3) Sometimes the instructions will say that you should only write on one side of the paper — if you don’t you will lose marks. Reading the instructions is part of your Exam too.

4) If nothing is mentioned then you can write on both sides — but make sure you check.

Examiners are shallow — they like good-looking work...

Bad presentation can cost you lots of marks — so structure your work and read the instructions.

Section Eight — Personal Writing Skills
Revision Summary for Section Eight

There's plenty for you to learn in this Section. Personal writing sounds easier than essay work, but in fact it's just as difficult. Make sure you know the skills you need, particularly for descriptive writing and writing about your experiences. Remember — you’re trying to bring the experience to life for the Examiner. Never forget to read the instructions you’re given, though — that could cost you lots of expensive marks. This set of questions will help you revise the key information from the Section — as long as you read them through carefully before you answer them and follow the instructions exactly.

1) What are the five elements of style you need to use in your personal writing?
2) What is personal writing about?
3) Explain briefly what rhetoric is, and how you can use it:  a) in personal writing  b) in essays.
4) List four rhetorical tricks and explain how they work, giving an example of each from the two texts on P.81.
5) Why should you vary the style and tone when you write about your experiences?
6) Why do you need to grab the Examiner's attention immediately? How do you do that?
7) What two kinds of opinion can you give in your experience writing?
8) What does descriptive writing do? Give two tricks you can use in descriptions.
9) What are the three ways of describing people? Write three short descriptions of someone you know using each of the three ways in turn.
10) Write a short passage about a dungeon. Try to describe it clearly, giving a sense of what it is like to be there.
11) Write a short passage about a big party, describing it in detail.
12) Write the opening paragraphs of a novel. Try to grab the reader's attention immediately and introduce the story, using description and dialogue. Only give the key information.
13) How do you decide on the plot and style of a story?
14) Write the outline for a plot about a masked bandit helping the poor. Don't just copy a famous story — think of your own version.
15) Write a short first person narrative about a race.
16) Write a short third person narrative about a fight.
17) How should you lay out a drama script? Give a brief example of the opening of a scene.
18) Write a review for the last film you saw.
19) Write a review for the last book you read.
20) Imagine that you live in Ancient Rome. You have just found out that Brutus and Cassius have decided to murder Rome's ruler, Julius Caesar. Write a letter to Caesar warning him about the conspiracy. Remember to address him formally as a ruler, and try to include details that fit the setting — for example, "I will meet you behind the Circus Maximus tonight to give you full details of the plot". Try to make the letter believable — you're playing a role.
21) Write a report for a sports match you saw recently.
22) Write a report on a big news story. Remember to give the facts as clearly as you can.
23) Write a formal letter to a famous living writer, asking them for any tips they have for writing. Remember to follow the rules for formal letter writing.
24) Write an informal letter to a friend telling them about a typical day at school, and what your ideal day would be if you could do anything you wanted.
25) Give five key features of good presentation.
26) Only answer the questions with even numbers in this revision summary. If you've done all of them then you obviously didn't read all the questions through before starting. Don't make the same mistake again.
Talking About Culture

Many of the texts you will read for your English course come from different cultures around the world. The ideas, themes and images of the texts come from their own cultures.

Every Text is Grounded in a Culture

1) It doesn't matter where in the world you are, a text is always affected by the culture in which it was written.
2) The ideas and themes important to people in England have always been the source of literature in England. The same goes for Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Even though these countries share the same language, their literature can often be very different.
3) The same thing is true of any literature written in English; whether it comes from India, from Africa, from Australia or the USA.
4) The culture behind a text is part of its context (see P.45).

English is Spoken all over the World

1) Many countries around the world have English as a native language or as one of the official languages of that country. This doesn't mean their culture is English.
2) These countries are mostly former colonies of the British Empire, now independent.
3) This is one of the reasons why English has become the unofficial language of the world.
4) The other main reason is the power, wealth and influence of the USA, particularly in the media.

Be Aware of Other Cultures When You Read Texts

1) Many of the expectations of our culture are irrelevant to texts from elsewhere.
2) Don't judge before you read them — try to understand what it's like to live in another culture.
3) Don't forget — the themes of literature are similar all over the world, in any language. People will always fall in love, make friends, betray each other, fight enemies and try to live their lives in freedom.
4) When you read texts from other cultures, you must try to identify with the characters, just as you would with any other text.
5) Ask yourself whether there are similarities between the feelings of characters in the text and feelings you may have. The situations and experiences may be different, but you are a human too. Literature is always concerned with learning about the experiences of others.

Cultures — even yeasts have them...

One last topic to go. You'll definitely have to look at texts from other cultures during your course — so make sure you learn the key skills. Remember — don't judge a text before you read it.
Cultural Context

The central skill in this Section is **empathising**. It means reading **without prejudice**, and trying to **identify** with characters from **cultures** and **situations** in which you’ve never been.

**Cultural factors create identity**

1) **LANGUAGE** — Every culture identifies itself by the **language** it uses. This is why many different cultural **groups** in Britain today still **keep up their own languages and dialects alongside English**; for example, **Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, Hebrew, Jamaican, Welsh and Gaelic**. It's also why different **areas** of Britain maintain their **dialects**; for example, **Yorkshire, Geordie, Cockney, Scots** etc. This is very important for literature: the poets **Benjamin Zephaniah and Derek Walcott** use **Jamaican dialect** for much of their writing.

2) **RELIGION** — When you read texts from other cultures you should always look for **clues** to the **religion** of that culture. Many religions have sets of **rules** and **customs** that people living in that culture have to **obey**; for example, women **dress** differently in **Islamic cultures**, and many religions **forbid** the eating of **pork**.

**DON'T FORGET**: Many famous texts have been influenced by religious culture and imagery — including Irish texts like the novel **Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man**, by James Joyce, and the poetry of the Welshman Dylan Thomas.

3) **WEATHER** — This may sound strange but the **weather** of a country does **affect** its culture. Texts set in **Africa** or **India** may be concerned with the problems of **heat** and **droughts**, or **heavy rains** during a monsoon season. In the same way, texts set in **Britain** are often concerned with **rain**...

4) **POLITICS** — Read **carefully** for any information about **politics**. Many books discuss the **inequalities** that people face in other countries. **Maya Angelou** and **Toni Morrison** write about the political situation faced by **black people**, and particularly by **black women** in the **USA**. Books like **Cry, the Beloved Country** (1948) by **Alan Paton**, discuss the racist system of **apartheid** in South Africa, which existed until very recently. **Chinua Achebe**'s **Things Fall Apart**, is about the impact of **British colonialism** on the **Nigerian Ibo tribe**.

5) **GENDER** — This is partly a **political** issue, but it's also a **general reflection** of different societies, where **women** are often expected to conform to **traditional ideas of marriage** and **motherhood**. When you read a text from another culture, look at the way men and women **relate** to each other. Ask yourself if the women and the men are **treated differently**.

6) **LIFESTYLE** — Different cultures have different **expectations**. In some cultures, everybody must **work**, and education comes second to **survival**. Some cultures in the past were built on **slavery**, and the lives of slaves was **harsh** and **cruel**. Even though the **main events** of people's lives are often the same — **birth, marriage, family, death** — the **culture** they live will affect what kind of opportunities they have during their lives.

**Cultural documents — like theatre tickets I suppose...**
It looks pretty daunting, I know, but cultural context is really very easy to spot when you're reading a text. Just look out for these **six factors**, and see if they're **different** from your culture.

**SECTION NINE — TEXTS FROM OTHER CULTURES**


Multicultural Societies

Any text you read has its own cultural context — it doesn’t matter who wrote it.

Many Texts are about the Conflicts between Cultures

1) Cultural conflict has become a major theme in modern literature.
2) English is becoming a world language spread by American films, music and culture.
3) Many texts are about the clash between different cultures — particularly in places like Britain where people come from all sorts of ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as being British.
4) An example is Farrukh Dhondy’s collection of short stories, Come to Mecca, about the relationship between the traditional white community and the Bengali community in London.
5) Some authors try to bring their two cultures together: Salman Rushdie writes about India and Britain.
6) Even in the past, Scots authors like Walter Scott and Robert Burns wrote in standard English as well as Scots, so as to appeal to larger audiences.

Remember the Two Rules of Cultural Context

When you look at texts from other cultures, there are two rules you should always keep in mind:

RULE 1: Think about your own context, and how it affects your understanding of the world, especially your understanding of what is right and wrong.

RULE 2: Look at the context of the text you’re reading. Be sure you understand the view of the world presented, and how it’s different from your own view.

1) Don’t forget to check that you have understood any new vocabulary, especially dialect forms.
2) Always remember that English written in other cultures may not follow the same grammar rules as you need for your Exams — read it carefully, but don’t copy it when you write.

I knew a stick once — he wanted to dialogue...

Texts from other cultures are specifically mentioned in all syllabuses, so you’ll certainly have to study them. I know it sounds hard work to find out all about cultural context, but you can pick up a lot of easy marks here if you do your research thoroughly. Coursework essays on texts from other cultures are always popular with Examiners — it means you can do loads of research too.

Section Nine — Texts From Other Cultures
Revision Summary for Section Nine

Texts from other cultures form an important part of your Syllabus, which is why we’ve looked at them briefly in this Section. In fact, the skills you need for looking at the texts are exactly the same as for any other. The only difference is the context they were written in, and the context in which you read them.

Make sure you understand the idea of cultural context, and how it affects the way people write. Don’t forget that a lot of literature written in English doesn’t come from England, and doesn’t follow the same rules of grammar and spelling. Just remember that your answers to Exam and Coursework questions must be written in standard English. Try reading some books from other cultures — you could also read translations of books from other languages. All your reading will help your critical skills and improve your writing — which means better marks.

Look over these summary questions quickly, to ensure that you’ve understood everything in this Section. If you’re not clear about something, then go back and look at the relevant page again.

1) Is all literature in English part of the same culture? Explain why not?
2) What is the cultural context of a text?
3) What is your own cultural context? Think about where you live and what your daily life, your family and your friends are like.
4) Give the two reasons why English has become the unofficial language of the world?
5) What shouldn’t you do when reading texts from other cultures?
6) Why is it important to look for the similarities between you and the characters in the text, as well as the differences?
7) What are the six factors that create cultural identity?
8) Why is religion important to cultural context?
9) What does the weather have to do with cultural context?
10) What should you think about when you look at gender issues in a text?
11) Why do different groups of people have different dialects?
12) Why is cultural conflict a common theme in literature today?
13) How do authors sometimes try to bring two cultures together?
14) What are the two rules for looking at cultural context?
15) Why is it important to think about your own context when you read a text?
16) Do texts from other cultures always follow the rules of standard English?
17) What should you do if you come across unfamiliar vocabulary in a text?
18) What should you avoid doing in your own work?
19) Write a comparison of your own cultural context with a different context. Try to find five similarities and five differences between the two. What effect do these differences have on life in these cultures?
20) Would you like to live in another culture? If so, then explain why, and which one. If not, then explain why. Make sure you give real reasons, not prejudices.
Looking at a Single Text

Time to practise looking at a few texts, using your comprehension and reading skills. Let’s start by looking at this famous poem by William Blake.

Tyger, Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps of skies
Burned the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp?
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

How to Look at this Poem

1) Start by scanning the poem. Then write down what you think it’s about.
2) Then read the poem again carefully. Think about every sentence and every word.
3) Now start taking notes — what you think the theme of the poem is and who is speaking.
4) Look at the style — what features of poetic language are used, and what images.
5) Look at the tone of the poem — how do the words sound? What tone of voice is the speaker using?
6) How does the poem make you feel? How has it made you feel this way?
7) Then you can plan your essay. Remember to look for useful passages to quote. When you talk about the poem you must give examples to support your argument.

A Comprehension Analysis of this Poem

1) The poem starts by describing a tiger, but it soon starts talking about an “immortal” creator.
   = first impression from scanning the text.
2) The narrator of the poem doesn’t talk about himself, but he gives away something about his character in the course of the poem. He is talking directly to the tiger, asking it questions all the time, without giving or receiving any answers — this means the poem is using rhetoric. He’s asking who created the tiger and imagining what kind of being or god could have done it.
   = an opinion on the main theme of the poem based on the general features, and a comment on who the narrator of the poem is. Each point is supported by the text.
3) The poem has a simple rhyme scheme — there are six stanzas (groups of lines) with four lines each. The first two lines rhyme with each other, and the last two lines rhyme with each other. The style of the poem is rhetorical, asking lots of questions without answers.
   = looks at the style of the poem and the features of poetic language it uses.
Looking at a Single Poem II

4) The poem uses lots of *images* of fire — in the first line the tiger is *burning bright* in a dark forest ("of the night"), in the second stanza the tiger’s *eyes* burn and the poet asks who would dare to *seize the fire*, and in the fourth stanza there is a *furnace*.

   There is lots of *physical description* of body parts — belonging to the *tiger* and to the tiger’s *creator* — the "sinews" of the tiger’s heart and the "shoulder" of the creator. In stanza four the poet gives several images of tools — anvils, furnaces, hammers and chains. This sounds like a description of a blacksmith’s forge.

   = looking at the images of the poem and trying to explain what effect they create.

5) The poem’s tone is one of *uncertainty* and *fear* — there are lots of *questions*, but no *answers*, and the *language* is full of words like "terror" and "dread".

   = brief comment on the tone of the poem.

6) The poem makes you feel *curiosity* and *wonder* — it makes you wonder how a creature as *terrifying* and *beautiful* as a tiger is *created*, and what kind of *being* would create it. It’s very *vivid* — especially when it describes the *physical processes* of actually *making* a tiger.

   = simple note on how the poem made you feel and why.

An Example Extract from a Comprehension Essay

The tone of the poem is one of wonder and fear. The narrator never receives any answers to his questions — this creates an air of mystery. It means that the narrator doesn’t know the answers, and doesn’t know if anything he says is true or not. This makes the poem very uncertain and fearful.

The narrator describes the tiger in a tone of fear — it is "burning" and it has "fearful symmetry." This make him even more afraid of the being who created the tiger — he imagines that the being must be "immortal", and wonders what sort of being would "dare" to create something so terrible and powerful as a tiger.

In stanzas three and four, the narrator imagines what it would be like to make a tiger — how you would physically build one. He imagines the creator twisting the sinews to make the heart, and as he twists them, the heart coming to life and starting to beat. This is a frightening image — the narrator wonders what "dread" (terrible) hands and feet the creator would need.

The word "beat" also has another meaning, to hit, so perhaps the narrator is thinking of the creator beating the tiger’s heart into shape. This fits with the next stanza which contains several images of a blacksmith’s forge. The word "beat" has two possible meanings, both of which give vivid images of making a tiger.

In stanza four, the narrator imagines that the creator would be like a blacksmith, building the tiger with a hammer and anvil, and making the brain in a furnace. He imagines what it would be like to hold the tiger’s claws ("deadly terrors") as you were making them.

In stanza five, the narrator then imagines how the rest of the universe would react to the creation of such a terrible thing as a tiger. He uses an image of personification to give a sense of wonder — the stars throwing down their spears. Then he wonders about the creator himself — whether he was pleased to make something so terrible and "smiled", and whether he could also make something as meek as a Lamb. Here he also means the Lamb as an image of Christian religious belief — the idea that Christ was like a Lamb.

The last stanza is exactly the same as the first, except that the question has a more sinister note. Instead of asking who "could" create a tiger — who was physically able to make one — it asks who would "dare" — what sort of being this creator would have to be.
Comparing Two Texts

The other key skill you need to practise is comparing two texts. Remember, everything you say must be backed up by examples — but you’re giving your opinion.

Read the Two Poems Individually First

Surprised by joy — impatient as the wind
I turned to share the transport — Oh! with whom
But thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That sport which no viceatitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind —
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss! — That thought’s return
Was the worst pang that sorrow bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart’s best treasure was no more:
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.
("Surprised by Joy," William Wordsworth)

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
O, could I lose all father now! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon ‘scaped world’s and flesh’s rage,
And, if no other misery, yet age?
Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say here doth lie
Ben Jonson, his best piece of poetry.
For whose sake, henceforth, all his vows be such
As what he loves may never like too much.
("On my Son," Ben Jonson)

Look for the Main Similarities and Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Both poems are about losing someone you love — more exactly, they’re both about how it feels to be the person left alive.</td>
<td>1) Wordsworth’s poem starts with a description of a particular moment when he felt joy instead of grief; Jonson’s poem begins immediately with his grief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Both poems are addressed to the dead and both speak about the narrator’s great love for the person — Wordsworth’s poem calls the person “my heart’s best treasure,” Jonson calls the person his “best piece of poetry.”</td>
<td>2) Wordsworth’s poem starts off with joy but descends into grief as the narrator realises again that his loved one is gone forever. Jonson’s poem starts off with grief but it is also a farewell — the narrator tries to come to terms with his loss by saying that his son was lent to him, and has now escaped the harsh world and the misery of old age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Both poems recognise that they have lost the loved person forever and that they will never love anything else as much in the future (“years unborn” and “henceforth”).</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Plan your essay based on the similarities and differences — look at the themes, style and tone of the poems to find examples (P.100-101 will show you how).

Context Information Can Help but Isn’t Essential

1) "Surprised by Joy" was first published in 1815, but in 1812, Wordsworth’s daughter Catherine died — this means the poet had first-hand experience of losing his child.
2) This might mean that the poem is based on a real-life experience — but only "might". For a poet like Wordsworth, it was important to be true to feelings rather than the simple facts.
3) Ben Jonson lived between 1572-1637, and his son also died very young. Again, he is writing about his feelings, but his poem is about one specific moment.

Look for any more similarities and differences between these two poems, then write a practice essay comparing their themes and style. Say which you prefer.

Section Ten — Practical Examples
Here is a list of books that you should try to read. Some of these books will be part of your Course, others are worth reading anyway because they have good stories. This revision guide has used examples from older texts because these are the ones that cause the most problems. This isn't a complete list, it's just a few suggestions.

**Novels**
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
- Maya Angelou
- Jane Austen
- Emma
- Pride and Prejudice
- Mansfield Park
- Captain Corelli's Mandolin
- Louis de Bernières
- Charlotte Brontë
- Jane Eyre
- Wuthering Heights
- Emily Brontë
- Heart of Darkness
- Joseph Conrad
- The Secret Agent
- Charles Dickens
- A Tale of Two Cities
- David Copperfield
- Great Expectations
- Daniel Deronda
- Silas Marner
- Bridget Jones' Diary
- Helen Fielding
- The Great Gatsby
- F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Lord of the Flies
- William Golding
- Ernest Hemmingway
- The Old Man and the Sea
- Nick Hornby
- Aldous Huxley
- On the Road
- Jack Kerouac
- Beloved
- Toni Morrison
- Jazz
- Animal Farm
- Nineteen Eighty-Four
- George Orwell
- Anita and Me
- Meera Syal

**Plays**
- Waiting for Godot
- Samuel Beckett
- Popcorn
- Ben Elton
- All My Sons
- Arthur Miller
- Death of a Salesman
- The Crucible
- Shakespeare
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- As You Like It
- Hamlet
- King Lear
- Macbeth
- Much Ado About Nothing
- Othello
- The Tempest
- Twelfth Night
- Androcles and the Lion
- George Bernard Shaw
- St Joan
- Tom Stoppard
- Arcadia
- The Real Inspector Hound
- The Importance of Being Earnest
- Oscar Wilde
- A Streetcar named Desire
- Tennessee Williams

**Poetry**
Any poetry by W.H. Auden, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, John Betjeman, Robert Browning, Thomas Hardy, John Hegley, Ted Hughes, Rudyard Kipling, Philip Larkin, Louis MacNeice, Wilfred Owen, Christina Rossetti, Siegfried Sassoon, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Derek Walcott, W.B. Yeats or others.

**Autobiography**
- A Postillion Struck by Lightning
- Dirk Bogarde
- The Diary of Anne Frank
- Anne Frank
- Unreliable Memoirs I, II, III
- Clive James
- Bugs and a Tiger
- John Masters

**Travel Writing**
- Notes from a Small Island
- Bill Bryson
- The Kon-Tiki Expedition
- Thor Heyerdahl
- Blue Highways
- William Least-Heat Moon

Remember: anything you read can help your English skills — and marks.
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## Commonly Misspelled Words

Here is a list of the most common words that people spell wrongly. Learn them now — if you don’t you’ll just be throwing marks away.

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