

English is a [West Germanic language](#) of the [Indo-European language family](#), with its [earliest forms](#) spoken by the inhabitants of [early medieval England](#).^{[3][4][5]} It is named after the [Angles](#), one of the ancient [Germanic peoples](#) that migrated to the island of [Great Britain](#). English is [genealogically West Germanic](#), closest related to the [Low Saxon](#) and [Frisian languages](#); however, its vocabulary is also distinctively influenced by [dialects of French](#) (about [29% of modern English words](#)) and [Latin](#) (also about 29%), plus some grammar and a small amount of core vocabulary influenced by [Old Norse](#) (a [North Germanic language](#)).^{[6][7][8]} Speakers of English are called [Anglophones](#).

The earliest forms of English, collectively known as [Old English](#), evolved from a group of West Germanic ([Ingvaenonic](#)) dialects brought to Great Britain by [Anglo-Saxon settlers](#) in the 5th century and further mutated by Norse-speaking [Viking](#) settlers starting in the 8th and 9th centuries. [Middle English](#) began in the late 11th century after the [Norman conquest of England](#), when considerable [French](#) (especially [Old Norman](#)) and [Latin-derived vocabulary](#) was incorporated into English over some three hundred years.^{[9][10]} [Early Modern English](#) began in the late 15th century with the start of the [Great Vowel Shift](#) and the [Renaissance](#) trend of borrowing further Latin and Greek words and roots into English, concurrent with the introduction of the [printing press](#) to [London](#). This era notably culminated in the [King James Bible](#) and [plays of William Shakespeare](#).^{[11][12]}

Modern [English grammar](#) is the result of a gradual change from a typical [Indo-European dependent-marking](#) pattern, with a rich [inflectional morphology](#) and relatively [free word order](#), to a mostly [analytic](#) pattern with little inflection, and a fairly fixed [subject-verb-object](#) word order.^[13] Modern English relies more on [auxiliary verbs](#) and [word order](#) for the expression of complex [tenses](#), [aspect](#) and [mood](#), as well as [passive constructions](#), [interrogatives](#) and some [negation](#).

[Modern English](#) has spread around the world since the 17th century as a consequence of the worldwide influence of the [British Empire](#) and the [United States of America](#). Through all types of printed and electronic media of these countries, English has become the leading language of international [discourse](#) and the *lingua franca* in many regions and professional contexts such as science, [navigation](#) and law.^[3] English is the [most spoken language](#) in the world^[14] and the [third-most spoken native language](#) in the world, after [Standard Chinese](#) and [Spanish](#).^[15] It is the most widely learned [second language](#) and is either the official language or one of the official languages in [59 sovereign states](#). There are more people who have learned English as a second language than there are native speakers. As of 2005, it was estimated that there were over 2 billion speakers of English.^[16] English is the majority native language in the [United Kingdom](#), the [United States](#), [Canada](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#) (see [Anglosphere](#)) and the [Republic of Ireland](#), and is widely spoken in some areas of the [Caribbean](#), [Africa](#), [South Asia](#), [Southeast Asia](#), and [Oceania](#).^[17] It is a [co-official language of the United Nations](#), the [European Union](#) and many other world and regional international organisations. It is the most widely spoken Germanic language, accounting for at least 70% of speakers of this Indo-European branch.