

# Understand this learning area – English

## Introduction

The Australian Curriculum: English has been developed on the basis that all students will study English in each year of schooling from Foundation to Year 10.

## Rationale

English is the national language of Australia and, as such, is central to the lives, learning and development of all young Australians. Through the study of English, individuals learn to analyse, understand, communicate and build relationships with others and the world around them. It helps create confident communicators, imaginative and critical thinkers, and informed citizens.

Australia is a linguistically and culturally diverse country, with links to Asia.

Participation in many aspects of Australian life is dependent on effective communication in Standard Australian English. This is central to the study of the English curriculum and all other learning areas. In addition, proficiency in English is invaluable globally.

The English curriculum helps students to engage imaginatively and critically with literature and appreciate its aesthetic qualities. They explore ideas and perspectives about human experience and cultural significance, interpersonal relationships, and ethical and global issues within real-world and fictional settings. Students are exposed to literature from a range of historical, cultural and social contexts. Through the study of texts, students develop an understanding of themselves and their place in the world. The English curriculum explores the richness of First Nations Australian voices and voices from wide-ranging Australian and world literature.

The study of English plays a key role in the development of literacy, which gives young people the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace. It helps them become ethical, informed, perceptive, innovative and active members of society. The English curriculum plays an important part in developing the understanding, attitudes and capabilities of those who will take responsibility for Australia's future.

## Aims

The English curriculum aims to ensure that students:

- **learn to purposefully and proficiently read, view, listen to, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex texts across a growing range of contexts**
- **understand how Standard Australian English works in its spoken and written forms, and in combination with non-linguistic forms of communication, to create meaning**
- **develop interest and skills in examining the aesthetic aspects of texts and develop an informed appreciation of literature**
- **appreciate, enjoy, analyse, evaluate, adapt and use the richness and power of the English language in all its variations to evoke feelings, form ideas and facilitate interaction with others.**

## Structure

The English curriculum is presented in year levels from Foundation to Year 10. Content is organised under 3 interrelated strands:

- **Language**
- **Literature**
- **Literacy.**

The strands and sub-strands are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: English content structure

## Language strand

In the Language strand, students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works. Students learn how language enables people to interact effectively, build and maintain relationships, and express and exchange knowledge, skills, attitudes, emotions and opinions. Oral language is the foundation of learning and an essential component of exploring ideas, expressing viewpoints, forming arguments and building vocabulary. Language operates within a contextual framework, in which choices vary according to topics, purpose and audience. Students discover the patterns and purposes of English

usage, including spelling, grammar and punctuation at the levels of the word, sentence and extended text. By developing a body of knowledge about these patterns and their connections, students learn to communicate effectively through coherent, well-structured sentences and texts. They gain a consistent way of understanding and talking about language, language in use and language as a system. This enables them to reflect on their own speaking and writing, and discuss these productively with others. This strand informs teaching and learning activities, and connects to key concepts and skills in the other strands.

The Language strand has 3 sub-strands:

### **Language for interacting with others**

Students learn that language varies according to relationships, social setting, purpose and audience, and is a means for expressing personal and social identity.

### **Text structure and organisation**

Students learn how texts are structured for different audiences and contexts, and to achieve particular purposes. They learn the techniques that authors use to guide and influence the reader or viewer through effective use of resources at the level of the whole text, paragraph and sentence.

### **Language for expressing and developing ideas**

Students learn how authors control and use a range of clause structures and word groups as well as combinations of sound, image, movement and layout. They build vocabulary and learn how to understand and use words according to context.

### **Literature strand**

The Literature strand engages students in the study of literary texts of personal, cultural, social and aesthetic value. These texts include works that are recognised as having enduring social and artistic value, some of which may be referred to as classic or canonical texts, and some that attract contemporary attention. Literature is a dynamic and evolving body of work comprising texts (written, spoken, visual, multimodal, print and digital) from diverse historical and cultural contexts. These texts are valued and appreciated for their form and style, and contribution to cultural, historical and social understanding. Learning to appreciate literary texts and to create their own literary texts enriches students' understanding of the breadth and complexity of human experiences. It builds students' knowledge of the interrelationship of language and culture, and stimulates creative and critical thinking. Students appreciate, analyse, interpret and evaluate a range of literary texts. This range includes the oral narrative traditions and literature of First Nations Australians, classic and contemporary literature from wide-ranging Australian authors, and world literature including texts from and about Asia. Students create texts such as short stories, poetry, prose, plays and short films.

The Literature strand has 4 sub-strands:

### **Literature and contexts**

Students learn how characters, events, perspectives and issues in literary texts are shaped by the historical, social and cultural contexts in which they were created.

### **Engaging with and responding to literature**

Students learn to respond personally to literary texts and make connections to their own lives, other texts and the responses of others.

### **Examining literature**

Students learn how to explain, analyse and evaluate the ways in which stories, characters, ideas, experiences, opinions and contexts are reflected in texts. They learn to compare and appraise the ways authors use language and literary devices to influence readers. They also learn to understand, evaluate, interpret and discuss how certain stylistic choices can create multiple layers of interpretation and effect.

### **Creating literature**

Students learn how to use personal knowledge and literary texts as starting points to

create texts. They create texts with imaginative and literary qualities in different genres and forms, and for particular audiences. Using print, digital and online media, students develop skills that allow them to convey meaning, address significant issues, and heighten engagement and impact.

### **Literacy strand**

In the Literacy strand, students make meaning through application of skills and knowledge from the Language strand. They develop their ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school. This ability helps them to participate in Australian life more generally. They learn the sound (phonemes) and letter (graphemes) correspondences of English and how these combine when they begin to read and write. Students learn to adapt language to meet the demands of general or specialised purposes, audiences and contexts. They learn about the different ways in which knowledge and opinion are represented and developed in texts. They learn that more or less abstraction and complexity can be shown through language and multimodal representations. Texts chosen include media texts, everyday texts and workplace texts from increasingly complex and unfamiliar settings. Texts are composed using language ranging from the everyday language of personal experience to more abstract, specialised and technical language, including the language of schooling and academic study. This means that print and digital texts are included, and that listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing and creating are all developed systematically and concurrently.

The Literacy strand has 5 sub-strands:

#### **Texts in context**

Students learn that texts are influenced by historical and cultural contexts, and particular purposes and audiences.

#### **Interacting with others**

Students learn how language is used to express ideas, arguments and opinions in spoken and written presentations by selecting and using linguistic and multimodal elements.

#### **Analysing, interpreting and evaluating**

Students learn to apply text processing skills and strategies to navigate increasingly complex texts. Students learn to comprehend what they read and view. They develop more sophisticated processes for interpreting, analysing, evaluating and critiquing ideas, information and issues from different sources. Students explore how conventions and structures are used in written, digital, multimedia and cinematic texts. They use their growing knowledge of text structures, language and visual features, and literary devices to explain how texts influence different audiences.

#### **Creating texts**

Students apply knowledge and skills they have developed in other strands and sub-strands to create spoken, written and multimodal texts. They create these texts with clarity, authority and novelty. They do so by selecting key aspects of a topic as well as language and multimodal features. As part of the process of creating texts, students learn to edit for enhanced meaning and effect. They develop and consolidate a handwriting style that is legible, fluent and automatic, and that supports sustained writing.

#### **Phonic and word knowledge**

Students develop knowledge about the sounds of English (phonemes) and learn to identify the sounds in spoken words. They learn the letters of the alphabet and how to write words by using combinations of these letters. They apply their knowledge of phonemes and graphemes to decode words. Students learn that patterns and generalisations relate to the spelling of words in English. They learn to apply phonic knowledge to decode text, especially from Foundation to Year 2. From Year 7, the strand is called Word knowledge to reflect that students have progressed beyond phonic development.

### **Key considerations**

#### **The role of English in the Australian Curriculum**

The English curriculum plays a central role in the Australian Curriculum and contributes

to all other learning areas by establishing and expanding students' knowledge of the English language and how it is applied in different contexts. Students apply their knowledge of English to engage with learning area content and to communicate effectively across all learning areas. The English curriculum requires the most teaching time of any learning area due to its fundamental role.

Teachers make decisions about the time required to address each content description depending on the needs of their students. It is not expected that equivalent time will be allocated to each content description. Teachers determine how content can be integrated across the 3 strands of the English curriculum and how English content can be integrated with the other learning areas.

### **Integrating the strands in planning**

Teaching, learning and assessment programs should balance and integrate the 3 strands to support the development of knowledge, understanding and skills. The focal point for a unit of work or learning activity may arise from any strand. However, the intention is that units and activities draw on all 3 strands in ways that are integrated and clear to learners.

### **Language modes**

The processes of listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing – also known as language modes – are interrelated. The learning of one often supports and extends learning of the others. To acknowledge these interrelationships, content descriptions in each strand of the English curriculum incorporate listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing in an integrated and interdependent way.

Learning contexts that address particular content descriptions will draw from more than one of these processes to support students' effective learning. For example, students learn new vocabulary through listening and reading. They apply their knowledge and understanding in their speaking and writing, and in their comprehension of spoken and written texts.

### **Texts**

Texts can be written, spoken, visual, multimodal, and in print or digital/online forms. Multimodal texts combine language with other means of communication such as visual images, soundtrack or spoken words, as in film or digital media. Texts include all forms of augmentative and alternative communication; for example, gesture, signing, real objects, photographs, pictographs, pictograms and Braille. Texts provide important opportunities for learning about aspects of human experience and about aesthetic value. Many tasks that students undertake in and out of school involve understanding and producing texts in everyday and workplace contexts. The purposes of these texts may be aesthetic, imaginative, reflective, informative, persuasive, analytical and/or critical, or any combination of these.

Distinctions among types of texts can be useful when selecting materials for students at each year level to listen to, read, view, write and create. These distinctions can also guide the kinds of purposeful activities that can be organised around these materials. Although many types of texts are easy to recognise based on their subject matter, forms and structures, the distinctions between types of texts need not be sharply defined or formulaic.

Teachers and schools are best placed to make decisions about the selection of texts in their teaching and learning programs to address the content in the English curriculum while also meeting the needs of the students in their classes.

### **Protocols for engaging First Nations Australians**

When planning teaching activities involving engagement with First Nations Australians, teachers should follow protocols that describe principles, procedures and behaviours for recognising and respecting First Nations Australians and their intellectual property.

Teachers should use approved resources such as those that may be provided by their state or territory school system, or First Nations Australians education consultative groups, or other protocols accredited by First Nations Australians.

While the Australian Curriculum uses the terms "First Nations Australians" and "Australian

First Nations Peoples”, there may be other terms that First Nations Australians of a particular area or location prefer. It is important to use the terms preferred in a particular area or location.

### **Meeting the needs of diverse learners**

The Australian Curriculum values diversity by providing for multiple means of representation, action, expression and engagement, and allows schools the flexibility to respond to the diversity of learners within their community.

All schools have a responsibility when implementing the Australian Curriculum to ensure that students’ learning is inclusive, and relevant to their experiences, abilities and talents.

For some students with diverse languages, cultures, abilities and talents, it may be necessary to provide a range of curriculum adjustments so they can access age-equivalent content in the Australian Curriculum and participate in learning on the same basis as their peers.

In the English curriculum, meeting the needs of diverse learners may include selecting appropriate texts that affirm aspects of diversity and acknowledge the impact of diversity on students’ social worlds. Texts can be written, spoken, visual, multimodal and in print or digital/online forms. Texts include all forms of augmentative and alternative communication; for example, gesture, signing, real objects, photographs, pictographs, pictograms and Braille. The English glossary defines key terms such as “speak”, “write”, “read” and “listen”. This provides important information about how students can access content within the Australian Curriculum and demonstrate what they know and can do. Teachers will design and adapt assessment, which may include varying the mode used to assess knowledge and skills. Teachers may provide alternatives for oral presentations, including live and recorded presentations. They may provide flexibility in open-ended tasks that can be completed at different levels of complexity for their students.

The English curriculum is for all students. It is recognised that some students may require adjustments to support how they see, hear and/or process language. Students may require access to a wide range of approaches including, but not limited to:

- **auditory, visual and kinaesthetic methods of instruction**
- **simultaneous learning modes such as combinations of listening, speaking, reading, viewing and writing resources**
- **resources such as picture cues for words or hand and mouth movements to illustrate a sound**
- **peer-assisted learning**
- **challenging individual and group extension activities**
- **devices, mnemonics, rhythms and rhymes to reinforce vocabulary, expressions and features**
- **alternatives to representing understanding including drawing, role-play and digital tools.**

### **Students for whom English is an additional language or dialect (EAL/D)**

EAL/D students’ experiences, understandings and expectations may be different from those assumed to be “common knowledge” in Australian learning contexts and must therefore be considered. The curriculum often refers to the familiar and the everyday; however, the “everyday” is determined by social and cultural contexts. Students attempt to make connections between new learning at school and what is known from home.

EAL/D students need to learn English, learn through English and learn about English.

EAL/D students require specific support to learn and build on the English language skills needed to interact at school and to access the curriculum. EAL/D students need support to learn the different registers of English. These include the social language of informal interactions as well as the learning area-specific tasks. Standard Australian English is the variety of spoken and written English language used in Australia in more formal settings, such as for official or public purposes, and recorded in dictionaries, style guides and grammars. While it is always dynamic and evolving, it is recognised as the “common language” of Australians.

Many languages are spoken in homes and communities around Australia, including the many

First Nations Australian languages and dialects. EAL/D learners start school with spoken and/or written skills in one or more languages. EAL/D students may have already developed relevant concepts and skills in their first language or dialect. Their existing language skills are a rich resource for learning English and for accessing the curriculum.

### **Key connections**

#### **General capabilities**

General capabilities equip young Australians with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions to live and work successfully. General capabilities support and deepen student engagement with learning area content and are best developed within the context of learning areas.

Opportunities to develop general capabilities in learning area content vary. While Literacy and Numeracy are fundamental to all learning areas, literacy development is core to the English curriculum. In addition, all other general capabilities are relevant to English. General capabilities are identified in content descriptions when they are developed or applied through the English content. They are also identified in content elaborations when they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning.

#### **Literacy**

In the English curriculum, literacy is developed through the study of the English language in all its spoken, written and visual forms. Literacy equips students with the skills to confidently listen to, read, view, speak, write and create texts in all learning areas. As students develop literacy skills, they understand how language use is determined by different contexts. They develop the skills to acquire and build knowledge and understanding, and to communicate their emotions, opinions and ideas with others. Through analysing, interpreting and evaluating a range of texts, students understand language features and conventions, and are exposed to a broad vocabulary.

#### **Critical and Creative Thinking**

In the English curriculum, students develop critical and creative thinking through listening to, reading, viewing, creating and presenting texts. They also develop critical and creative thinking through interacting with others, creating and experimenting with literary texts, and discussing the aesthetic or social value of texts. Through close analysis of texts, students critically analyse the opinions, perspectives and unstated assumptions embedded in texts. They develop critical thinking as they express personal responses and preferences, state and justify their points of view, and respond to the views of others. Students develop creative thinking skills by considering authors' innovations, and planning, exploring and creating ideas for imaginative texts. They develop creative thinking when they use and adapt language to represent novel ideas.

#### **Personal and Social capability**

Through the English curriculum, students develop personal and social capabilities as they learn that language is central to personal and social identity. When engaging with a range of texts, students explore diverse perspectives and how these shape different interpretations and responses. Interacting with others in formal and informal settings helps students to become effective communicators. They are able to articulate their opinions and collaborate with others. Through close reading and discussion of texts, students experience and evaluate different personal and social behaviours and perspectives. They develop connections and empathy with characters in different contexts.

#### **Intercultural Understanding**

Through the English curriculum, students develop intercultural understanding as they study texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts. They learn that the English language has been influenced by different cultural groups, languages, speakers and writers. Students engage with the oral narrative traditions and contemporary literature of First Nations Australians, wide-ranging Australian literature, and world literature including texts from and about Asia. They explore cultural perspectives and world views from the past and present. Students interpret and analyse authors' ideas and points of

view represented in traditional and contemporary texts in a range of media. They learn to appreciate issues of intercultural meaning and sensitivity.

## **Ethical Understanding**

In the English curriculum, students develop ethical understanding as they explore ethical issues within real-world and fictional settings. They identify moral messages, ethical concepts, bias and stereotypes, and their representation in texts. As students develop their understanding, they compare, evaluate and discuss how these messages are created through language. Students analyse ethical perspectives on contemporary issues. They evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the ways in which arguments are represented.

## **Digital Literacy**

Through the English curriculum, students develop the ability to use digital tools to communicate and collaborate, and read and access information. They use a range of tools to create and edit digital and multimodal texts and presentations. They select and evaluate sources, and respect intellectual property. They consider the suitability of information, audience and online safety when using digital tools.

## **Numeracy**

In the English curriculum, students use numeracy skills to communicate, read and evaluate information that includes quantities, statistics and patterns. They use numeracy skills to understand and present evidence and substantiate ideas. They determine, examine and comment on any possible bias that is present in numerical data and quantitative sources.

## **Cross-curriculum priorities**

Cross-curriculum priorities support the Australian Curriculum to be a relevant, contemporary and engaging curriculum that reflects national, regional and global contexts. Cross-curriculum priorities are incorporated through learning area content; they are not separate learning areas or subjects. They provide opportunities to enrich the content of the learning areas, where most appropriate and authentic, allowing students to engage with and better understand their world.

Opportunities to apply cross-curriculum priorities to learning area content vary. All 3 cross-curriculum priorities have relevance and meaning to the English curriculum. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is embedded in content descriptions where it is core to the delivery of the content in English. All 3 priorities are also identified in content elaborations where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures**

In the English curriculum, students explore First Nations Australians' cultural knowledge, traditions and experiences represented and communicated through traditional, modern and contemporary texts. The histories and cultures are reflected across the 3 strands.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority within the English curriculum provides culturally relevant and engaging contexts for all students to:

- **appreciate literature created by First Nations Australian authors and illustrators**
- **engage with and respond to literature about the histories, cultures and perspectives of First Nations Australians**
- **examine texts that include events, Country/Place, identities and languages of First Nations Australians**
- **identify and discuss the representation of First Nations Australians' histories and cultures**
- **explore oral narrative traditions of First Nations Australians and their importance for connections to people, Country/Place and cultural identity.**

## **Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia**

In the English curriculum, students explore texts that reflect the rich and diverse cultures, belief systems and traditions of the Asia region, and Asian experiences in and with Australia. Students engage with traditional and contemporary authors, illustrators

and texts from across Asia. They investigate the role of literature in developing, maintaining and transforming cultural beliefs and practices, and communicating the rich cultural diversity of the Asia region. They reflect on the intrinsic value of these texts as well as their place and value within contexts and communities.

## **Sustainability**

Through the English curriculum, students explore how ideas and opinions about issues such as social justice and living sustainably can be represented in texts from different historical, social and cultural contexts. They examine how these issues are debated and reported in texts. English develops students' ability to analyse and evaluate multiple points of view.

## **Learning areas**

Through the English curriculum students develop skills in understanding increasingly complex texts and communicating knowledge and understanding, which are essential to all learning areas.

## **English and Languages**

The English Curriculum and Languages share a focus on interacting with others and creating spoken, written and multimodal texts with an awareness of purpose and audience. Both learning areas help students to understand the relationship between spoken and written language, and how cultural context shapes meaning. They develop students' understanding of and ability to use language features.

## **English and Humanities and Social Sciences**

The English curriculum and Humanities and Social Sciences share a focus on analysing, interpreting and evaluating information and texts. Both learning areas consider the ways in which perspectives and points of view shape texts and represent ideas. Both learning areas help students to develop written, visual, digital and multimodal texts by selecting text structures and language features for a range of purposes and audiences.

## **English and The Arts**

The English curriculum and The Arts share a focus on communicating ideas and perspectives in spoken, written and visual modes with an awareness of purpose and audience. Both learning areas help students develop speaking, listening, visual literacy and writing skills as they work individually, and collaborate with others, to create texts, presentations and performances.

## **English and Mathematics**

The English curriculum complements learning in Mathematics by developing students' skills in reading and interpreting informative texts that include features such as graphs, tables, data displays and diagrams. Both learning areas develop students' skills in describing and explaining processes. Students draw on vocabulary and word knowledge acquired in the English curriculum to understand and use mathematical terminology. They recognise that common words often have specific meanings in mathematical contexts.

## **English and Health and Physical Education**

The English curriculum complements Health and Physical Education by developing students' skills in interpreting, analysing and evaluating informative and persuasive texts. Both learning areas help students learn to communicate effectively for a variety of purposes to different audiences. Students apply skills learnt in the English curriculum to express their ideas and opinions, evaluate others' viewpoints and express their emotions in social and physical activity contexts.

## **English and Science**

The English curriculum complements Science by developing students' skills in investigating ideas. Students develop inquiry skills through understanding informative texts and interacting with others. Skills learnt through the study of English support students to understand and summarise Science knowledge. These skills help students to communicate their knowledge and understanding in evidence-based texts, using scientific and technical



vocabulary accurately.

## **English and Technologies**

The English curriculum complements Technologies by developing students' understanding that the use of language and vocabulary is influenced by context. In Technologies, students draw on skills and knowledge developed in the English curriculum to understand and communicate ideas, concepts, detailed proposals and instructions to a variety of audiences. They use English skills to discuss and evaluate processes and technological information.