

Glossary - English vocabulary

Active voice

A sentence is written in **active voice** when the subject of the sentence is performing the action (for example, "The cat chased the mouse.")

Adjective

An **adjective** is a word used to describe and give more information about a noun, which could be a person, place or object.

Adverb

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

Adverbial Phrases

Adverbial Phrases are words or phrases which tell the reader when something is happening.

Alliteration

Often used in poetry, **alliteration** is the repetition of an initial letter or sound in closely connected words.

Antonym

Antonyms are words with opposite meanings (love and hate, for example). Words with similar meanings are **synonyms**.

Apostrophe

Apostrophes are punctuation marks used to show possession and to show contraction (also known as omission).

Article

Articles are words which tell us whether a noun is general (any noun) or specific. There are three articles: 'the' is a **definite article** and 'a' and 'an' are **indefinite articles**.

Argument text

Argument text is a piece of writing which expresses points of view 'for' or 'against' the subject.

Biography and autobiography

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

Blending sounds

Blending sounds means looking at a word and, rather than saying the separate sounds that make it up, linking the sounds together and saying the whole word in one go. Blending is an essential phonics skill which children are taught as part of learning to read.

Book report

A **book report or review** is your child's written critique of a book. Book reports tend to focus on describing what the book is about, while reviews are more concerned with your child's opinion of the book.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a process in which a question or problem is posed, then a group of people give ideas which are noted by a person who writes them down on paper or a board for the group to see.

Clause

Clauses are the building blocks of sentences, groups of words that contain a subject and a verb. Clauses can be main or subordinate.

Cohesive devices

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

Comma

A **comma** separates units of meaning in a sentence, e.g. Lana bought some apples, grapes, oranges, peaches and plums for her fruit bowl.

Comparative

The **comparative** form of an adjective or adverb is used to compare one person, thing, action or state to another. Examples of comparatives: sadder, lighter, more famous, worse, more angrily. The comparative is usually formed by adding the suffix -er.

Conjunction

A **conjunction** is a type of connective ('connective' is an umbrella term for any word that connects bits of text). Co-ordinating connectives include the words and, but and so; subordinating connectives include the words because, if and until.

Consonant and consonant cluster

The alphabet is made up of 26 letters, 5 of which are vowels (a, e, i, o, u) and the rest of which are **consonants**. A consonant is a sound that is made by blocking air from flowing out of the mouth with the teeth, tongue, lips or palate. Two consonants which appear next to each other are known as a **consonant cluster**.

Contracted words or contractions

Contracted words are short words made by putting two words together. Letters are missed out in the contraction and replaced by an apostrophe, for example I'm (I am) or it's (it is).

Creative writing

Narrative or **creative writing** involves writing stories with a structure, using knowledge of grammar and punctuation to present them correctly.

CVC / CCVC / CVCC words

A **CVC word** is a word that is made up of a **consonant, vowel and consonant**. **CCVC words** are made up of a **consonant, a consonant, a vowel and a consonant**. In **CVCC words** the sequence is: **consonant, vowel, consonant, consonant**.

Decoding

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

Determiner

A **determiner** is a word that introduces a noun and identifies it in detail. Determiners can be **articles** (a, an, the), demonstratives (this, that), possessives (your, his), quantifiers (some, many), numbers (six, sixty).

Digraph

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

Direct and indirect speech

Direct speech is a sentence in which the exact words spoken are reproduced in speech marks (quotation marks or inverted commas). **Indirect speech** or reported speech is when the general points of what someone has said are reported, without actually writing the speech out in full.

Embedded clause

An **embedded clause** is a **clause used in the middle of another clause**. It is usually marked by commas.

Encoding

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

Exception words

Exception words are words in which the English spelling code works in an unusual or uncommon way. Children learn to read and spell common exception words throughout their time in primary school, particularly in Reception, Y1 and Y2.

Explanation text

An **explanation text** describes a process. These non-fiction texts are usually written in the present tense, with numbered points and diagrams or pictures to make the process clear.

Fable

A **fable** is a story that features animals, plants or forces of nature that have been anthropomorphised (given human qualities) and ends with a 'moral'.

Figurative language

Figurative language uses words and ideas to suggest meaning (as opposed to literal language, which communicates in a plain and obvious way). In primary school, forms of figurative language studied include metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole and onomatopoeia.

Fronted adverbials

Fronted adverbials are words or phrases at the beginning of a sentence, used like adverbs to describe the action that follows.

Grapheme

A **grapheme** is a written symbol that represents a sound (a phoneme). This can be a single letter, or could be a sequence of letters (ai, sh, igh, tch, for example).

Guided reading

Guided reading is a regular, time-tabled session in which teachers work with a small number of children in the classroom to analyse a text in detail, making sure each child can read each word and discussing meaning of the text with them.

Haiku

A **haiku** is a form Japanese poetry that has three lines. There can be any number of words, but there must be 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line and 5 syllables in the third line. Haikus don't usually rhyme.

High-frequency words

High-frequency words are some of the most common words in the English language. A number of them don't follow phonetic rules, so they must be learned individually by heart. Children start to learn to read and write high-frequency words in Reception, and are given more words to memorise in KS1 and KS2.

Homophone

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings. Some homophones are pronounced the same way and spelled the same way but have different meanings; others are pronounced the same way but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

Information text

An **information text** is a non-fiction text which gives information about a particular thing. Information texts are sometimes called non-chronological reports, because they are reporting information about something without mentioning the order of events.

Instruction text

An **instruction text** is a non-fiction text such as a recipe or manual. Instruction texts include lists of items and numbered points detailing how to carry out a certain activity.

Irregular verbs

While most verbs form their different tenses according to an established "formula", some verbs do not form their tenses in a regular way and are called **irregular verbs**.

Journalistic writing

Journalistic or newspaper writing is a non-fiction genre which children learn to analyse and write in Key Stage 2 English.

Kenning

A **kenning** uses a two-word phrase in the place of a one-word noun in poetry (for example, sea-farer instead of sailor).

Letter sound

A **letter sound** is literally the sound we make when we are reading a written letter of the alphabet.

Letter string

A **letter string** is a group of letters that appear in a word. For example, the letter string str is contained in each of these words: string, straight, strike, strain.

Metaphor

A **metaphor** is a comparison which is not literally true. It suggests what something is like by comparing it with something else with similar characteristics (for example, my brother is a piglet).

Modal verbs

A **modal verb** is a special type of verb which changes or affects other verbs in a sentence. Modal verbs are used to show the level of possibility, indicate ability, show obligation or give permission.

Multi-clause sentence

A **multi-clause sentence** is another term for a complex sentence.

Mystery text

A **mystery story** is one in which an unexplained event (often a crime) has occurred and the reader discovers how events unfolded by reading the text.

Myths and legends

A **myth** is a traditional, ancient story that is fictional. Myths were often written to explain natural phenomena and quite often involved gods and fantasy creatures. A **legend** is a story which takes place within human history. Legends are widely believed to be rooted in the truth, but will have evolved over time and taken on fictional elements.

Non-chronological report

A **non-chronological report** is a non-fiction report which is not written in time order. Explanation texts, recounts and instruction texts are non-chronological reports.

Non-fiction

Any text that is not a story is **non-fiction**. Non-fiction texts studied at primary school include instruction texts, recounts, information texts, explanation texts, persuasive texts, biography, journalistic writing and argument texts.

Noun

A **noun** is a naming word. It is a thing, a person, an animal or a place. Nouns can be common, proper, abstract or collective.

Object

The **object** of a sentence is the thing or person that is involved in an action, but does not carry it out ("The cat chased **the mouse**").

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a word that names a sound, but also sounds like that sound. For example: boom, honk, pop, crack, cuckoo, crack, splat, tweet, zoom, sizzle, whizz, buzz, hiss, rip.

Paragraph

A **paragraph** is a section of writing consisting of one or more sentences grouped together and discussing one main subject.

Passive voice/ Passive verbs

A sentence is written in **passive voice** when the subject of the sentence has something done to it by someone or something. For example: "The mouse was being chased by the cat."

Past progressive

The **progressive** is the verb tense we use to describe actions that continued for a period of time in the past (I was walking / I was singing).

Past perfect

The **past perfect** is the verb tense we use to describe actions that were completed by a particular time in the past.

Personification

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

Persuasive text

Persuasive text is non-fiction text which aims to make the reader do something. Adverts, posters and travel brochure are all kinds of persuasive text.

Phoneme

A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound.

Phonics

Phonics is a method of teaching children to read by linking sounds (phonemes) and the symbols that represent them (graphemes, or letters). Phonics is the method used in primary schools in the UK today to teach children to read.

Phrase

A **phrase** is a small group of words that does not contain a verb.

Play script

A **play script** is a piece of writing written for the stage. It is likely to include a list of characters, may be divided into acts (which are then divided into scenes) and contain dialogue and stage directions.

Prefix

A **prefix** is a string of letters that are added to the beginning of a root word, changing its meaning.

Preposition

Prepositions are linking words in a sentence. We use prepositions to explain where things are in time or space.

Present progressive

The **present progressive** is the verb tense we use to describe actions that continue for a period of time (I am walking / I am singing).

Present perfect

The **present perfect** is the verb tense we use to describe actions that are completed by the present.

Pronoun

A **pronoun** is a word used to replace a noun. Examples of pronouns are: he, she, it, they. Pronouns can be personal and possessive.

Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension means understanding what is being read and being able to engage with a text on many levels, understanding its layers of meaning.

Recount

A **recount** is a non-fiction piece of writing that gives details of an event that has happened. Diary entries, newspaper articles and letters are all forms of recounts,

Relative clause

A **relative clause** is a type of **subordinate clause that adapts, describes or modifies a noun by using a relative pronoun** (who, that or which).

Rhyme

Rhyme is the repetition of similar sounds in words, usually at the end of lines in poems and songs.

Root word

A **root word** is a basic word with no prefix or suffix added to it. By adding prefixes and suffixes to a root word we can change its meaning.

Sentence

A **sentence** is one word or a group of words that makes sense by itself (a grammatical unit). Sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation point. Sentences usually contain a subject (doing something) and a verb (what is being done).

Sentence types:

Exclamation: A sudden cry or remark to show surprise, strong emotion, or pain. It must start with 'what' or 'how' and should include a subject and a verb.

Statement: Describes an event, a sentence that tells the reader something e.g. Daniel watched the television.

Command: A command gives an instruction or tells someone to do something. Commands usually begin with an imperative verb e.g. Go and brush your teeth!

Question: A question is used to find out information e.g. Why is your bedroom so messy?

Simile

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

Simple, compound and complex sentences

A **simple sentence** has a subject and one verb. A **compound sentence** is formed when you join two main clauses. A **complex sentence** is formed when you join a main clause and a subordinate clause.

Spider diagram

A **spider diagram** is a planning tool used to help children make notes on a particular subject.

Split digraph

A digraph is two vowels which together make one sound (as in the words tail, boat, found or read). When a digraph is split by a consonant it becomes a **split digraph**, sometimes known as 'magic e'.

Standard English

Standard English is the "correct" form of English, taught in schools and used in formal written communication.

Story setting

A **story setting** is the location in which a story takes place. The setting could anywhere, from a park to a home to an alien planet.

Subject

The **subject** of a sentence is the thing or person who is carrying out the action described by the verb ("The cat chased the mouse.").

Subjunctive

The **subjunctive** is a verb form used to express things that could or should happen, for example: If I *were* to go... / I demand that he *answer*!

Subordinate clause

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

Success criteria / WILF

A **success criteria** is a list of features that a teacher wants the children to include in their work during the course of a lesson. It is sometimes known as the WILF (What I'm Looking For).

Suffix

A **suffix** is a string of letters that go at the end of a word, changing or adding to its meaning. Suffixes can show if a word is a noun, an adjective, an adverb or a verb.

Superlative

The **superlative** form of an adjective or adverb is used to compare one person, thing, action or state to all the others in its class. Examples of superlatives: saddest, lightest, most famous, worst, most angrily. The superlative is usually formed by adding the suffix -est.

Syllable

A **syllable** is a single, unbroken sound of a spoken (or written) word. Syllables are sometimes called the 'beats' of a word.

Synonym

Synonyms are words with the same or similar meanings.

Talk partner

Talk partners are pairs of children who discuss topics in the classroom. The use of talk partners is a common technique in the primary-school classroom.

Text-marking

Text-marking is highlighting, circling, underlining or labelling the features of a text. The purpose of text-marking is to make children aware of how different texts are set out and which features are used.

Traditional tale

A **traditional tale** is a fairy story or fairy tale, a story that has been told and re-told for many years and almost everyone knows. Examples of traditional tales are Cinderella, Goldilocks and the Three Bears and Little Red Riding Hood.

Trigraph

A **trigraph** is a single sound that is represented by three letters, for example tch, igh in fight or ear in bear.

Verbal reasoning

Verbal reasoning is a form of problem-solving based around words and language. Verbal reasoning tasks include solving word problems, following written instructions to come up with a solution, spotting letter sequences and cracking letter- and number-based codes.

Verbs and powerful verbs

A **verb** expresses a physical action, a mental action or a state of being. Powerful verbs are descriptive, rich words.

Verb tense

Verb tenses tell us the time when an action took place, in the past, the present or the future.

Vowel

The alphabet is made up of 26 letters, 5 of which are vowels (a, e, i, o, u) and the rest of which are consonants. A **vowel** is a sound that is made by allowing breath to flow out of the mouth, without closing any part of the mouth or throat.

Word bank

Word banks are lists of words to support children with their writing. These will vary according to the age of the child and the task given.

Word family

Word families are groups of words that have a common feature, pattern or meaning. They usually share a root word.