

English/Language Arts Standards



ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

English as a Way of Knowing

Listening, speaking, writing, and reading are vehicles for communication. They enable people to express their thoughts and demonstrate what they have learned. In the past, students were taught specific lessons under the rubric of language, and the skills were practiced, reinforced, and analyzed throughout the day in subjects such as geography, history, and science. Today the teaching of language arts is often considered the exclusive responsibility of English teachers. However, the complex role of language in education makes it clear that the language arts cannot be left entirely to the English class. Improvement in the language arts requires students to read and write frequently in all disciplines and to receive ample feedback. Following these standards, the language arts should be viewed as being fundamental to pedagogy in any subject.

English teachers have the expertise to ask, explore, and help students answer fundamental questions about language, among them:

- How does one convey a message in writing?
- What genres are most suitable in a given context, and what are the textual features of those genres?
- What is Standard American English?
- How might one become a more skillful reader who can understand both the text's surface and deeper meanings?
- What shared and unique features characterize specific literary genres?
- What are significant texts in American, British, and world literature, and what might they reveal about their cultural and historical contexts?
- What are the characteristics of effective listening and speaking, and how might one acquire and improve them?

English is mastered in the context of challenging content that requires students to think deeply and to exercise discipline in order to demonstrate understanding, raise questions, and present ideas.

Understanding and Using These Standards

Vertical Team (VT) members reviewed research on the skills and content knowledge students need to succeed in college; they also examined exemplary College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and state and national standards in English. As members of the Commission for a College and Career Ready Texas (CCRT), the VT co-chairs studied reports and heard expert testimony. The VT's first draft was posted for public comment in October 2007 by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Concurrently, the VTs revised the standards in response to feedback from the CCRT, and this second draft was incorporated into the Report of the CCRT. The standards adopted by the THECB incorporate revisions based on the feedback to both public documents.

These standards are designed to be straightforward and easy to read. The VT members sought to avoid redundancy, wordiness, or specialized terminology. The danger with this approach is that even though each statement may be simple, the underlying meaning may not. The mastery level necessary on any particular standard depends on the specific task faced by the student. In other words, the standards can be fully understood only in the context of the learning materials or assignments with which the student is presented.

In this document, the rules of Standard American English are embedded into the writing process because a student must use language correctly in order to be college and career ready. For example, it would be highly unusual for a student to be given a multiple-choice test on parts of speech in a first-year English class in college. These rules are also contained in the cross-disciplinary standards to indicate the need for students to be able to use grammar and punctuation correctly in all subject areas. Another reason that mechanics and usage are not separated from the writing process is that the context of communication—what educators and scholars call the rhetorical situation—determines what is appropriate and what is effective. Because language is employed in a wide range of situations, skillful users of language must know how to

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interpret and express themselves in a variety of forms and formats. Therefore, the standards address the full range of American English, allowing for the possibility that language can be used appropriately in many different formats and that students must have mastery of the rules associated with those formats and know when and how to apply those rules.

Because the language arts are present throughout the core curriculum, standards for the language arts appear in two places in this document—as elements of the cross-disciplinary standards fundamental to all subjects and as a stand-alone subject.

I. Writing

A. Compose a variety of texts that demonstrate clear focus, the logical development of ideas in well-organized paragraphs, and the use of appropriate language that advances the author’s purpose.

1. Determine effective approaches, forms, and rhetorical techniques that demonstrate understanding of the writer’s purpose and audience.

2. Generate ideas and gather information relevant to the topic and purpose, keeping careful records of outside sources.
3. Evaluate relevance, quality, sufficiency, and depth of preliminary ideas and information, organize material generated, and formulate a thesis.
4. Recognize the importance of revision as the key to effective writing. Each draft should refine key ideas and organize them more logically and fluidly, use language more precisely and effectively, and draw the reader to the author’s purpose.
5. Edit writing for proper voice, tense, and syntax, assuring that it conforms to standard English, when appropriate.

II. Reading

A. Locate explicit textual information, draw complex inferences, and analyze and evaluate the information within and across texts of varying lengths.

1. Use effective reading strategies to determine a written work’s purpose and intended audience.
2. Use text features and graphics to form an overview of informational texts and to determine where to locate information.
3. Identify explicit and implicit textual information including main ideas and author’s purpose.
4. Draw and support complex inferences from text to summarize, draw conclusions, and distinguish facts from simple assertions and opinions.
5. Analyze the presentation of information and the strength and quality of evidence used by the author, and judge the coherence and logic of the presentation and the credibility of an argument.
6. Analyze imagery in literary texts.
7. Evaluate the use of both literal and figurative language to inform and shape the perceptions of readers.
8. Compare and analyze how generic features are used across texts.



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9. Identify and analyze the audience, purpose, and message of an informational or persuasive text.
10. Identify and analyze how an author's use of language appeals to the senses, creates imagery, and suggests mood.
11. Identify, analyze, and evaluate similarities and differences in how multiple texts present information, argue a position, or relate a theme.

B. Understand new vocabulary and concepts and use them accurately in reading, speaking, and writing.

1. Identify new words and concepts acquired through study of their relationships to other words and concepts.
2. Apply knowledge of roots and affixes to infer the meanings of new words.
3. Use reference guides to confirm the meanings of new words or concepts.

C. Describe, analyze, and evaluate information within and across literary and other texts from a variety of cultures and historical periods.

1. Read a wide variety of texts from American, European, and world literatures.
2. Analyze themes, structures, and elements of myths, traditional narratives, and classical and contemporary literature.
3. Analyze works of literature for what they suggest about the historical period and cultural contexts in which they were written.
4. Analyze and compare the use of language in literary works from a variety of world cultures.

D. Explain how literary and other texts evoke personal experience and reveal character in particular historical circumstances.

1. Describe insights gained about oneself, others, or the world from reading specific texts.
2. Analyze the influence of myths, folktales, fables, and classical literature from a variety of world cultures on later literature and film.

III. Speaking

A. Understand the elements of communication both in informal group discussions and formal presentations (e.g., accuracy, relevance, rhetorical features, organization of information).

1. Understand how style and content of spoken language varies in different contexts and influences the listener's understanding.
2. Adjust presentation (delivery, vocabulary, length) to particular audiences and purposes.

B. Develop effective speaking styles for both group and one-on-one situations.

1. Participate actively and effectively in one-on-one oral communication situations.
2. Participate actively and effectively in group discussions.
3. Plan and deliver focused and coherent presentations that convey clear and distinct perspectives and demonstrate solid reasoning.

IV. Listening

A. Apply listening skills as an individual and as a member of a group in a variety of settings (e.g., lectures, discussions, conversations, team projects, presentations, interviews).

1. Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of a public presentation.
2. Interpret a speaker's message; identify the position taken and the evidence in support of that position.
3. Use a variety of strategies to enhance listening comprehension (e.g., focus attention on message, monitor message for clarity and understanding, provide verbal and nonverbal feedback, note cues such as change of pace or particular words that indicate a new point is about to be made, select and organize key information).

B. Listen effectively in informal and formal situations.

1. Listen critically and respond appropriately to presentations.
 2. Listen actively and effectively in one-on-one communication situations.
 3. Listen actively and effectively in group discussions.
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V. Research

A. Formulate topic and questions.

1. Formulate research questions.
2. Explore a research topic.
3. Refine research topic and devise a timeline for completing work.

B. Select information from a variety of sources.

1. Gather relevant sources.
2. Evaluate the validity and reliability of sources.
3. Synthesize and organize information effectively.

C. Produce and design a document.

1. Design and present an effective product.
2. Use source material ethically.

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