



Learning to fly in English

These are the skills and habits which outstanding students of English develop. Do as many of these as possible to become completely independent in the subject and to develop the skills and knowledge needed to attain 8/9 at GCSE and A* at A Level. **Remember that just doing what your teacher tells you - in your lessons and beyond - is not enough to develop your full potential in the subject.**

In your lessons

- Asking specific questions and asking for help.
- Thinking critically about your own work and finding ways to improve it.
- Listening to other students and the teacher, but often challenging and arguing with them!
- Thinking about ways in which new knowledge you encounter in the lesson fits in with what you already know.

Between your lessons

- Looking back over your notes and activities from the last lesson.
- Reviewing the work of a lesson - making sure you know what you have or haven't understood.
- Reading ahead in texts and making notes about plot, character and ideas.
- Writing down questions from your reading about words and ideas you don't understand to bring to your next lesson.
- Making notes of any questions to ask your teachers or look up.
- Going to see your teacher to ask for clarification and guidance.

Beyond your lessons

- Trying to read a challenging new book, poetry collection or play every week. It's okay not to finish it - the important thing is to try.
- Reading critical books about the texts you are studying and 'books about books'.
- Watching high quality film and TV and writing a critical reaction.
- Keeping a reading diary or blog.
- Talking to your friends and family about what you have read.
- Discussing and arguing about what you have read on goodreads.com or similar websites
- Listening to podcasts like '**Open Book**', '**A Good Read**', '**In Our Time**' and '**Start the Week**'.
- Developing a sense of the big picture - the history of English Literature and World Literature - and how what you have read relates to this. Where are the gaps in your knowledge?
- Reading a quality newspaper at least once a week.
- Going to the theatre and 'arthouse' cinema once a term if possible and writing a critical reaction (even just a quick paragraph).
- Keeping a vocabulary log to keep track of new words you encounter or an app like **vocabulary.com** to discover new words.
- The library should be your number one stop for reading material: ask for lists of recommendations and speak to our librarian who will be happy to help you
- Read book reviews in newspapers, especially weekend editions. You might try **The Guardian**, **Sunday Observer**, **The Daily Telegraph**, **The Times**, **The Independent** to name a few
- Keep a reading diary and an ongoing list of upcoming novels, short stories and poetry you would like to read
- Create a book review for display in the library or your English classroom
- Look out for films of books such as **Life of Pi**, **Sherlock**, **Eragon**, **The Jungle Book** and **The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas**. You could even write a review comparing the adaption of the book into a film

- Look at some of the following websites for ideas for reading:
 - <https://www.childrensbooksequels.co.uk/>
 - <http://www.authorhotline.com/>
 - <https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/>
 - <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>
 - <http://ukchildrensbooks.co.uk/>
- Watch out for winners of Children's Book Awards such as:
 - Guardian Children's Fiction Prize
 - Scottish Children's Book Award
 - Blue Peter Book Awards
 - CILIP Carnegie Medal
 - Waterstone's Children's Book Prize

The Internet can be both a blessing and a curse when studying English. Use it wisely and always check your sources, reference fully and research carefully.

- www.luminarium.org An Encyclopaedia and Anthology of English Literature and Historical Contexts
- www.poetryfoundation.org Features a learning lab, online magazine and search function of thousands of poets and their works.
- www.poetryarchive.org Explore the work, lives and musings of thousands of poets. Also includes footage and audio of poets reading.
- www.bfi.org.uk Discover, watch and discuss all aspects of British film and television. Includes articles, reviews and much more.
- www.afi.com As above, but this time from America.

Of course we recognise that our students have busy lives and that this level of engagement is not always possible all the time - but this is what you should aim for if you want to reach the highest level in the subject. You don't need to do ALL of these things to improve in English - just doing one or two of them will have an impact. Decide on two or three to focus on to improve your skills.