



10 Things to Do to Prepare for...

A Level English Language

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Activities

These activities will help you to develop reading and writing skills and wider knowledge that will help you succeed at A Level English Language. In addition, contact your teachers and ask them if they would like you to read any specific texts in preparation for next year - if they do then make that a priority over the summer.

1. Exam Board and Topics

Find out what exam board and specification you will be doing and download a specification overview from the exam board's website. Identify any topics you will be studying – eg. Gender, Language Acquisition, World Englishes – and start to do some wider reading related to these subjects. There is lots of information on the internet if you do not have access to textbooks. Be sure to make notes on what you find out and where you found the information.

Some websites to get you started might be:

- www.bl.uk
- www.geoffbarton.co.uk/student-resources.php
- www.englishandmedia.co.uk



2. Representation

This is the study of how people, places or things are presented via a conscious selection of words (lexis) and imagery (graphology) that have particular associations (connotations).

- Consider how you represent yourself on social media – why have you chosen those particular images? What have you said about yourself and what language have you used? Why choose to present that information in that particular way? What would you not put on social media? Why not?
- Write up your analysis of your self-representation.

3. Gender

Find some printed adverts selling a product to men and some selling a product to women. How is each gender represented in the texts? [Remember, this means you are considering what version of men and women is being constructed by the ads]

Repeat the exercise for adverts aimed at teenagers and older people.



4. Spoken language

Find out what the non-fluency features of speech are.

5. Transcripts

Look at some transcripts of spoken data on the internet and identify the transcript conventions that have been used. Record some real speech at home and then transcribe it. [You must get permission first before you record anyone!]

6. Representation of Speech

Compare your transcript of spoken language with how speech is represented in a novel. What are the differences? Are there any similarities? Write a comparative analysis.

7. Prosody and Para-linguistics

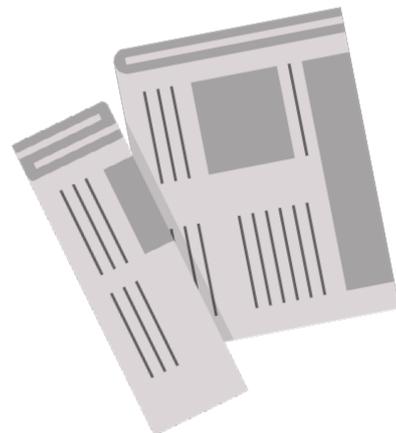
Find out what the prosodic and para-linguistic features of spoken language are then do the following activities:

- 'Come here' – How many different tones of voice could be used to say this phrase and how would that change the meaning of the utterance?
- Try speaking to other people in your usual tone of voice but keep a blank facial expression and do not use any hand gestures or body movements. What is the effect of this for both you and them? Does it hamper your ability to communicate effectively? Why?

8. Semantic fields

A semantic field is when a writer uses a range of words that all cluster around the same area of meaning. They will do this for a particular effect, for example a parent writing about trying to get their teenage child out of bed and helping with the household chores might use the semantic field of warfare to indicate what a huge and difficult struggle it is.

- Look at newspaper coverage of the current crisis and identify any semantic fields that are being used. What is the effect of these language choices?
- How are the NHS and other frontline workers being represented via words [lexis] and images [graphology]?
- How are those defying government regulations being represented?





9. History of Language

Research the history of the English Language. Produce a guide for other A Level students that includes a timeline.

There is lots of information on the internet but you could start with the British Library's website – www.bl.uk

10. Dialect / Sociolect / Idiolect & Accent

- Make a list of words/phrases that are particular to your geographical area [dialect]
- Make a list of words/phrases used specifically by social groups you identify with – these could be based on age, hobbies, fashion, music [sociolect]
- Make a list of words/phrases that are particular to you and the way you speak [idiolect]
- Accent – this is not the words we say but how we pronounce them. People can have quite strong reactions to accents. List as many different accents as you can and then what you think and feel about them and the people who speak this way. Do you have a reasonable explanation for your reactions or are they based on stereotypes, even if you do not consciously mean to do this?