

# ENGLISH – EXCEED AND EXCEL

## Homework Time

GCSE and A Level work will be completed in timed examination conditions so it is useful to prepare for this by ensuring that students spend the set time on homework tasks, uninterrupted by TV or refreshment breaks. Doing tasks without access to the computer is also good practice for later.

## Reading Non-Fiction

Undoubtedly the best aid to preparation for non-fiction questions at GCSE is to read parts of a good quality newspaper – you can help by discussing not only the content but also the style, structure, authorial intentions and layout of newspaper articles.

[www.firstnews.co.uk](http://www.firstnews.co.uk)

## Reading Fiction

You can help your child by encouraging them to read widely and regularly. Daily reading is set as additional homework for parents to monitor and Key Stage 3 students (Year 7 to 9) all participate in a weekly DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) session as part of the Form Time Programme. Below are some sources which may be of use:

### Bookshops and internet

While for most people the choice is between Amazon and Waterstone's, it is worthwhile patronising a good local bookshop if you are lucky to have one.

### The School Library

Our ILC has a good stock of classical and modern fiction and books on English texts. It is always worth checking here first if you are looking for a particular book, and requesting it if it is not available. We also have some recommended reading lists below.

### Public Libraries

There are a number of good public libraries in and around Lymm and Warrington. With all public libraries, you get the most out of them if you explore the online catalogue: some make no charge for books ordered over the internet, and now offer online access to several magazines.

It can be particularly fruitful to read and discuss with your child books that are written for both adults and young adults, such as 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time,' and 'Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.' Discussion could focus on plot, response to characters and relationships, ideas and themes, style, predicting what will happen in the light of what has happened, overall evaluation.

The new GCSE English Literature and Language course place emphasis on 'classic' texts that are part of the English canon and heritage, books that may provoke some discussion are: Silas Marner, Pride and Prejudice, A Christmas Carol, Lord of the Flies, Wuthering Heights, Great Expectations, Hardy tales, Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Hound of the Baskervilles. Starting to read at least some of the shorter older texts will help students prepare for this change.

For a list of recommended reading please click [HERE](#)

## Letter Writing

Writing a letter remains one of the most common exercises set at GCSE. You could encourage your child to write a letter occasionally instead of an email or text. The layout is less important than getting the tone, structure and sense of audience right. Letters that get results – to an MP, the local paper, to companies praising their product, to shops to complain about poor standards of service – are useful preparation for GCSE tasks.

## Checking written work for accuracy

Lymm High School recommends that students have access at home to a large dictionary, preferably one with encyclopaedia entries as well (such as The Oxford Dictionary of English) and a large thesaurus organised in alphabetical order, and that these are used in checking written work.

The most prevalent mistakes are those of sentence grammar. You can help your child by getting them to read back their work slowly aloud to check for ‘breathing spaces’ – the rule is that these should be marked NOT by a comma, but by full stop or one of the higher ranking punctuation marks – colon, semi-colon or dash.

The following websites may also support increasing written accuracy and ambitious vocabulary:

[www.bedrocklearning.org](http://www.bedrocklearning.org)

[www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com)

[www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)

[www.spellzone.com](http://www.spellzone.com)

[www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/education/spellingbee](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/education/spellingbee)

## Speaking and Listening

Students will be assessed at GCSE on their individual oral contributions, their ideas and their ability to discuss issues. Parents can help by engaging them in discussions where their contributions can be full and valued. It also helps to develop skills by watching others speaking, either on televised events such as, political events or even literature festivals such as:

Warrington Literary Festival (April)

Manchester Children’s Book Festival (usually held in June and July)

Denzell Gardens Book Festival (September).

## Research and Note-Taking

As with other subjects, students will have to do research, take notes, and then synthesise the results of this research. There is widespread misunderstanding about what is legitimate gathering of points from the work of others, and what constitutes plagiarism – attempting to pass someone else’s writing off as their own work. Parents can help in checking that work to be submitted is essentially their own and advising on sources of information in your own areas of expertise. Plagiarism is heavily penalised in public exams. Formatting notes into the student’s own words also uses effective cognitive skills which aid learning

## Television, Radio and Podcasts

In addition to watching programmes with a literary element, such as: 'Alice in Wonderland,' 'The Gunpowder Plot,' 'Howard's End' or 'Agatha Christie's Poirot.' Many of the literary adaptations are useful to supplement texts that are being studied in class as well as developing wider knowledge of written work.

It is also useful to listen to programmes such as the podcast of 'Question Time,' to discuss and compare the speaking style of guests and members of the public.

<http://effortlessenglishclub.com/blog-and-video-podcast>

## Places to Visit

English will involve the study of classic and modern drama texts. If anything of literary merit is shown in the vicinity, it is a good idea to take your child or encourage them to attend. Some of the local theatres offer fantastic productions such as: Lowry Theatre, Palace Theatre, Royal Exchange, Parr Hall.

Wider afield are some wonderful productions such as London which is uniquely well off with the National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company (amongst others). A visit to the Globe Theatre and Stratford-upon-Avon is also a must. However, the cinema can also be a worthwhile option, many now complete live screening and stream them to the mainstream theatres, for example the Royal Shakespeare Company and Branagh Theatre. Keep an eye out also for dramatic adaptations most recently there has been 'Macbeth' and 'Of Mice and Men'

Further afield:

- Canterbury for the Canterbury Tales Tour
- Haworth for any of the Bronte sisters
- Stratford-upon-Avon or the Globe Theatre/London Globe for Shakespeare
- Lake District for Wordsworth or Beatrice Potter
- Harry Potter World

## Websites

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/11\\_16/site/english.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/11_16/site/english.shtml)

[www.youngwriters.co.uk](http://www.youngwriters.co.uk)

[www.englishbiz.co.uk](http://www.englishbiz.co.uk)

[www.universalteacher.org.uk](http://www.universalteacher.org.uk)

[www.writingforward.com](http://www.writingforward.com)

[www.oxfordplayhouse.com](http://www.oxfordplayhouse.com)

[www.guardian.co.uk/books](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books)

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/>

<http://www.talkenglish.com/grammar/grammar.aspx>