

STEP Curriculum

Teacher Guide

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Chapter Three

Teaching Specific Skills

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Language Standards

In these next few pages, we present advice for teaching each of the language standards. As always, specific ideas for classroom activities that target the four skills are included in the resources section of this guide.

Complete List of Course Standards

	Writing (W)	Reading (R)	Speaking and Listening (S)
G	<p>Do not allow grammar mistakes to hinder the message.</p> <p>Consistently vary sentences (structure, beginning, and length).</p> <p>Consistently implement advanced, relevant vocabulary.</p> <p>Organize writing fluently; use transitions.</p>	<p>Comprehend information presented in a passage.</p> <p>Summarize information presented.</p> <p>Discern the definitions of complex vocabulary through contextual usage.</p> <p>Delineate the structure of an article.</p>	<p>Organize presentation content by talking points, remaining focused while presenting.</p> <p>Speak with good elocution and clear enunciation.</p> <p>Demonstrate engaging body language (eye contact, hand gestures, posture).</p> <p>Provide relevant and insightful responses to interview questions.</p>
A	<p>Organize given information by common themes.</p> <p>Use given information to create a relevant, specific, and arguable thesis.</p> <p>Support a thesis with relevant evidence; stay focused.</p> <p>Write insightfully; make connections.</p>	<p>Differentiate between concrete facts and authorial claims.</p> <p>Understand and recognize bias.</p> <p>Understand the implications of authorial intent.</p> <p>Compare and contrast two authors' differing viewpoints on a nuanced topic.</p>	<p>Defend one's position with coherent, organized arguments.</p> <p>Appeal to logos and pathos to deliver a persuasive speech.</p> <p>Develop and present specific counterarguments.</p> <p>Consistently maintain a professional, confident tone while speaking.</p>

Speaking and Listening (S)

Speaking and listening activities should always be integrated; especially in an academic English class, as is this one, the two cannot be disjoint. That is why the two skills are merged in the Scope and Sequence (which emphasizes speaking as the basis of presentation). Nevertheless, there are different ideas to keep in mind for speaking and listening.

When you are helping your students develop their speaking skills, you as a teacher will need to find a balance between accuracy and fluency. Accuracy refers to how correctly students use the vocabulary or grammar they know; fluency refers to their pace and control of the language. Many of the speaking standards specifically address fluency, as linguistic accuracy affects reading and writing as well, while fluency is a component of presentation. Still, you as the teacher need to be mindful of striking a balance between these goals when planning your lesson.

There are also two main types of listening that you should consider: listening for gist and listening for specific information (analogous to the reading skills of skimming and scanning). Whenever you have a speaking activity in class, you should ensure that you are giving students opportunities to practice both of these listening skills.

In general, for any speaking or listening exercise, you must follow the three points outlined below:

- Topic: you must choose a relevant topic that students will want to discuss and learn: the Scope and Sequence already helps you do this by providing you with key understandings for each lesson;
- Activities: choosing engaging and interesting activities is critical for a successful lesson, as if students are not engaged, they are less likely to speak or pay attention to other speakers;
- Vocabulary: students need to have the tools to speak in English before beginning the speaking activity, so it is important you give them vocabulary before you start the speaking component exercise - either the listening component of an activity, or a separate reading activity (think textbook) can help you introduce vocabulary to the students before they begin to practice speaking.

Strategies for Listening Activities

Listening is often the most challenging skill for students; they may struggle with the varying accents of English speakers, any slang/idiomatic language that emerges during an exercise, the pace of the language, and a potential lack of context. To address these issues, you should start with exposing students to accented English that matches their native L1 language (assuming your class only has Hindi speakers), and choose activities that do not include slang that may be too challenging for students to understand. Another helpful technique is to introduce the students to the most important ideas and share any context *before* the listening activity begins. This can be done through a mini-lecture or through a lead-in activity that helps them understand what information they will be hearing. Students generally struggle to “listen cold”, so a lead-in is usually important. That way, they go into the exercise with some knowledge of the context and with a particular focus that will help them stay engaged.

If students are listening to a movie or podcast, you can make use of simple features to improve their comprehension, such as pausing the recording, re-playing particular sections, playing the entire media over again, or using the board to note key ideas as they emerge during the activity. Also remember to be smart in how you choose what material the students will be hearing; the Sequence's connection section guides you in terms of choosing the topic, but be sure whatever material you choose is not too difficult, related to the key understandings, and uses the vocabulary students have been learning.

Strategies for Speaking Activities

With speaking activities, the most important thing you can do is create a positive environment. Be a kind and attentive teacher, and provide positive feedback each and every time a student presents to you. Speaking can be incredibly daunting for students, so be sure that you compliment them and show that you appreciate their efforts. Avoid correcting them in front of their peers; instead, note down common errors and plan future lessons or activities around these mistakes.

A great approach to helping students start speaking is called scaffolding. In scaffolding, you first provide the students with a template of language to use when they are practicing. For example, if your students are holding a debate, then you might provide them with examples of language that are generally used during debates. This way, their speeches have more structure and will likely include at least certain phrases that are grammatically correct. The important thing with scaffolding is that you gently correct errors that students may have in using the scaffold, so those phrases are guaranteed to be grammatically correct. Scaffolding can be used to help students with small sentences or with entire speeches. The most useful approach for students at this level is likely to introduce a few phrases that students can incorporate into a longer monologue or dialogue.

When first introducing these scaffold-phrases, be sure to have the students practice by drilling them. Then, you as the teacher can echo the phrase and correct any mistakes; you can also repeat the phrase with correct pronunciation. This way, students learn the scaffold before they employ it in future conversations.

Another great technique is called controlled speaking practice. In a controlled practice activity, students do not produce all of the speech themselves; rather, they follow a script that is given at the start of the lesson. The advantage of this approach is that students improve accuracy, pronunciation, and word/sentence familiarity. This type of activity is usually best for new learners of the language, but you can use it to introduce difficult concepts.

After a controlled practice exercise, it is best to give students free practice opportunities. Either this means that the students write an outline of a speech and then come back together and present their activity to you, or this might mean that students complete some sort of speaking activity in pairs. Either way: balance controlled practice with free practice in the classroom.

Reading

When it comes to reading activities, the focus should be on building skills, not necessarily on complete comprehension. While complete comprehension is often important, in the context of

an English classroom, it is far more important for you to equip your students with the skills to read a passage than it is to ensure they understand every word of every activity.

Reading is often the most neglected skill to be taught in an English class, but if you follow the Sequence, you will ensure your students have enough opportunities to practice their reading skills. If you use the textbook alongside your class, then you can know with confidence that your students are being given enough opportunities to read. That being said, do not solely rely on supplementary readings; follow the Sequence!

In this program, students are expected to enter at a grade 4 Common Core reading level (US). Our past experience has shown that this is usually the level students are at when they are in class nine or ten of a standard government school in India. By the end of the general part of the curriculum, they should be at a grade 5 or 6 level; the level at which most newspapers are written. After they finish the curriculum, they are expected to be at a grade 8 level, which is the level of Op-Eds and many other texts they will encounter in their daily lives.

Types of Reading

The way we approach a text changes depending on context. If we are reading for a school assignment or for work in a business, we generally practice intensive reading: reading a text in great detail so as to understand every word or idea. Outside of these settings, we tend to practice extensive reading: reading to understand gist, with a focus on big-picture ideas. In the classroom, you want to give students the opportunity to practice both styles of reading.

These are a few of the techniques to which you may want to introduce them (all of which are included at some point in the Sequence); ensure you plan your reading lessons to target different reading techniques. If you use our assessments in the classroom, students will be tested on how well they read a text, i.e. how well they make use of reading strategies to help them comprehend information. The specific skills we target are listed here.

- Previewing: providing your students with some initial information that helps them get a sense of the text beforehand;
- Skimming and scanning;
- Reading for gist or reading for Detail;
- Deducing meaning from context.

Teaching Reading Lessons

The most important consideration is choosing the right texts. You will certainly want to have different texts of different difficulties for the students in Part A of the course and for students in Part B of the course. Oftentimes, it is challenging to find a specific reading passage that will work for class; in these cases, feel free to adapt the text by re-writing portions of it. Your students will certainly appreciate this effort!

A second important consideration is to choose a variety of reading activities. Our assessments and sample activities provide some examples of different reading activities that you can use in the classroom (see the resources section). Incorporating different styles of reading activities will help your students learn more and stay engaged through the lesson.

Finally, encourage your students to read outside of the classroom! Again, the textbook is a great resource in this regard, though you can also find suitable articles or infographics to share with your students as well.

Writing

Writing is an interesting skill to teach, as what constitutes formal or proper writing is undergoing a change these days. That being said, this curriculum ensures your students are skilled in writing formal text-types that will be useful for them in their business careers or college classrooms. We recommend using social media to interest your students and encourage them to learn English, but as an academic English program, the goal is for them to become strong writers, capable of more than just texting. For that reason, the Sequence includes multiple different forms of writing that students can learn and practice, with an emphasis on producing essays.

An important thing to remember is that writing is like art, in that no one can completely “master” it. Unlike speaking, where students may reach a point of fluency, writing is a continual process of improvement. Your goal, however, is to follow the Sequence to ensure that students are strong writers who will not be rejected for any opportunity because of a lack of writing ability.

Writing in this Curriculum

The writing standards in this curriculum go from sentence-level, to paragraph-level, to essay-level. The focus here is on structure: how sentences go together (syntax), how to write effective paragraphs, and how to organize paragraphs into strong essays. We also take a more mathematical approach to the teaching of writing than other conventional models (think of the syntax table, for example, as given in the resources section).

Writing instruction begins with syntax, or how to structure sentences. As the teacher, you must emphasize that it is important to vary sentence kinds, beginnings, structures, and lengths. Understanding the sentence kinds relates to the grammar goal of the conditional tense, and understanding sentence structures requires an understanding of the parts of speech. For this reason, the writing standards tend to blend with the grammar goals. As a teacher, you can use writing-focused lessons as a good way to have your students practice grammar as well.

The philosophy the Sequence uses to help students learn to construct paragraphs and essays is based on the Western theory of the five-paragraph essay. This writing style forms the basis for writing instruction in most US schools. As such, there are many great teaching resources available for free online that you can use to help your students.

Teaching Writing

There are five stages of writing that students will move through as they learn English; you can adapt different stages for different activities depending on what it is you are teaching in any given lesson (next page).

- Copying: students copy words or phrases you provide - this is best for lower-level learners and should rarely be used in this program;
- Controlled writing: students write short responses to directed questions - this is the type of writing students are expected to do during reading assessments, though you can use these types of activities to introduce students to fundamental writing phrases in essays and such;
- Guided writing: you create an activity and provide templates for students to use in their writing passages - this is great for first introducing writing concepts that follow a defined structure, like introductory paragraphs or OPVLs, and so it is the type of writing students are expected to do during their assessments;
- Process writing: you set the topic and prompt, but students can write as they wish - this is the ultimate goal for writers in this course (think Bloom's taxonomy);
- Free write: students produce whatever they desire.

As students move through the various stages of writing, they may struggle or be demotivated. Writing is hard, so you need to do your part as the teacher and provide positive feedback. You will also need to balance between emphasizing the product and the process. For some of the standards, you may be more focused on the product that students have produced, i.e. with a grammatical language standard, you are likely more inclined to see how students have used the concepts in their essays. For other standards, the process is more important, such as when focusing on how to analyze and organize facts. A good strategy is to only focus on one (either process or product) when providing feedback, so as not to overwhelm your students.

Another way you can help students improve their writing is through peer-work. Help your students understand how to proofread their own assignments and how to mark-up their own papers to identify mistakes. Then, you can have them share their writing with each other so they can help their partners improve.

Chapter Five

Assessments



Assessment Overview

Frequent assessments are essential to ensure your students are actively developing the language standards. We recommend three general categories of assessment — skill-focused tests, unit tests, and summative assessment — that can be used throughout the course to provide feedback on student progress.

In this section, we will provide some general advice for how to administer assessments throughout the time you are using this program. We will help explain how students should be graded and how the rubrics can be applied to assess students. For all the assessment, the specific rubrics and standards are included in a later chapter.

Types of Tests

As mentioned, we generally recommend three categories of tests: skill-focused tests, unit tests, and summative assessment. Beyond this, teachers should make use of informal, low-stakes quizzes to measure reading comprehension, for example. These type of tests can be implemented whenever in whichever form the teacher feels best.

Summative Assessments

At the end of the general section and the end of the analytical section, the teacher must provide a summative assessment that tests student progress on all the relevant standards. For students in the general section, they must be tested on all twelve general standards. For students in the analytical section, they must be tested on all twenty-four writing standards (twelve general and twelve analytical).

We provide a sample assessment for each section in this chapter, and we provide instructions on how to write assessments for your own program. We highly encourage you to use our format for writing assessments, as it is a tried-and-tested way of measuring student progress on the language standards for this program.

Unit Tests

At the end of each unit, you will want to administer unit assessments that provide an opportunity to see how students are progressing on each of the language standards. Unit tests should be cumulative in terms of language standards assessed, though not necessarily cumulative in terms of humanities content. By that we mean that all writing standards that students have previously learned should be tested again, but the content of the test should focus on whatever the unit was that was being assessed. For example, if you are providing a test after completing Chapter Two: Technology, your writing test might include a writing exercise on social media that you grade with an emphasis on grammar and syntax, as these are the writing standards introduced thus far.

We provide general advice for how to write unit tests in this chapter of the teacher guide; however, the fundamental principles for writing a unit test are the same as for a summative assessment.

Skill-Focused Tests

As the name suggests, these are tests that focus on one skill. This means you are not grading every single language standard when you administer a skill-focused test; instead, you focus on one skill that the students have recently learned. These tests are relatively easy to make and easy to administer. They can be used throughout the term to gauge student progress before administering a unit test or summative assessment.

Testing Timeline

How and when you administer most assessments is up to you: the important tests are the summative assessments, of which there are three. The table below describes how long each test takes and provides a short description of what it entails.

Assessment Timeline

	Writing	Reading	Listening and Speaking
Placement	Write a paragraph about something from the student's personal life	Read at Common Core 4 Grade 4 level and answer basic comprehension questions	Hold a fluent, informal conversation discussing student's personal life
1:35	45 minutes 1 hour	45 minutes 1 hour	5 minutes delivery 1 hour 30 minutes
General	Write a five-paragraph expository essay, from a choice of four topics	Read at Common Core 5 - 6 Level (tend to be expository) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary - Comprehension Questions - Vocab in Context - Reverse Outline 	Give an informational speech of 5 minutes and answer questions about the content and its relevance; the speech is prepared at home
2:10	1 hour 1 hour 15 minutes	1 hour 1 hour 15 minutes	10 minutes delivery 2 hours 30 minutes
Analytical	Write a argumentative essay using evidence provided; essay must include a thesis, insightful analysis, and a counter-argument	Two-texts at Common Core 7 - 8 Level (tend to be analytical) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Similar questions to Year One</i> - OPVL - Compare/Contrast - Facts and Opinions 	Give a persuasive speech of 5 minutes - including a counter argument - and respond to questions from the examiner; the speech is prepared at home
3:10	1 hour 30 minutes 1 hour 45 minutes	1 hour 30 minutes 1 hour 45 minutes	10 minutes delivery 2 hours 30 minutes

As one can see from the above table, assessments get progressively longer as students progress through the course; this is because each test is measuring new skills *and* all the old skills assessed in prior sections.

Please note that there are two time measurements. The number in bold indicates how long each assessment lasts, while the number that is non-bolded is the amount of time teachers will need to allot in their planning to actually administer the assessments. These types are particularly high for the speaking sections, as we assume one teacher will be conducting the exam for fifteen students.

The Placement Assessment

The placement assessment is very much like the other summative assessments that students will take during the course. The assessment has three sections measuring writing, reading, and conversation abilities. It is also written in a format that is easily adaptable to mass-dissemination through an online platform.

Students are tested on the first three general writing standards, the first three general reading standards, and the first three general speaking and listening standards. Naturally, however, they are not expected to have high scores in each of the categories, though these are still the skills targeted.

Finally, note that the placement assessment is the most flexible of the three summative assessments. Teachers should feel free to omit certain sections or consider different placement mechanisms should they feel fit.

Writing Component

Students must produce at least one paragraph responding to a prompt that relates to their personal lives. Common topics in the past have included family life, hobbies, and school subjects. The assessment is only forty-five minutes long and is not meant to be an intensive exercise. Students are graded on the first three general writing standards.

Reading Component

The test is centered around a pre-selected reading passage that is at the US Common Core grade four standard. Then, students are presented with a series of comprehension questions that measure their ability in regard to the first three general reading questions. Students have forty-five minutes for this section of the assessment.

Listening and Speaking Component

In the form of an interview, students hold a short conversation about their lives. The content of this assessment is very similar to writing assessment, except that the method of production is oral rather than written. Students need to be able to respond to questions and produce cogent sentences, so listening is also assessed.

Five minutes are allotted for this assessment, but in general, conversations will not exceed three or four minutes. In total, if the examiner is assessing fifteen students (the maximum class size we have used at our own program), one hour and fifteen minutes will be needed.

The General Summative Assessment

As the name implies, the general summative assessment covers all twelve general language standards. Teachers should provide assessments throughout the term that use the same format as the general summative assessment so students have some familiarity with the assessment beforehand.

Writing Component

The writing component is a five-paragraph expository essay. Students will be given a choice of four prompts - relating to each of the four topics that are covered in this part of a course - from which to choose. An important element of this assessment is that students do not need to present an argument; they simply need to present an organized piece of writing. This portion of the assessment is limited to one hour.

Reading Component

Students will be presented with a passage at the Common Core grade five or six level. They will then be asked a series of follow-up questions of four general types: summary, comprehension, vocabulary, and reverse-outline. This portion of the assessment is also limited to one hour.

Listening and Speaking Component

A week before the assessment, students will be given two prompts and asked to prepare speeches that they can bring with them to the assessment. One prompt will be broad — allowing students to choose which topic they will discuss during the assessment — and the second prompt will be interdisciplinary. Students will prepare the speech at home, using the textbook for information. They are not expected to present an argument, but the speech should be informational and not necessarily personal.

During the assessment, the students will present their speech (which is not to exceed five minutes), and then the examiner will ask follow-up questions. The total time for this portion of the assessment is ten minutes.

The Analytical Summative Assessment

The analytical summative assessment is also a cumulative assessment that ends the course. Like with the general summative assessment, teachers should provide unit tests and practice assessments to students to complete before taking this final course assessment.

Writing Component

Students will be presented with a list of twelve factual statements that demonstrate two sides of a contentious topic relating to at least one of the four strands of the course. Students are tasked with defining and defending their position in an argumentative essay including a thesis, relevant evidence from the given statements, insightful analysis, and a counterargument. Students are given an hour and a half to complete this assessment.

Reading Component

Students will be given two passages (each around 200 words) — one at the Common Core grade seven level and one at the Common Core grade eight level — that will be presenting opposing viewpoints on the same topic. For each passage, students will be asked a series of quick questions assessing comprehension, fact and opinion understanding, and vocabulary; they will also have to summarize, reverse-outline, and analyze (through an OPVL) one of the passages. Finally, they will compare the authors' positions on the topic. This portion of the exam will last an hour and a half.

Listening and Speaking Component

Like with the general summative assessment, students will be given a list of prompts a week before the exam (in this case, four prompts: one for each topic). They will be expected to prepare a persuasive speech not to exceed five minutes that they may bring with them to the exam; the speech must be argumentative rather than informative. After the student presents, the examiner will spend five minutes cross-examining the student on their position. On the whole, this exam will take no more than ten minutes.

Performance Indicators

There are three separate indicators of student performance: the rubric band (test-independent and objective), the raw score (test-dependent and objective), and the letter grade (test-dependent and subjective).

Above all, the main performance indicator is the rubric band. For each standard, a rubric outlines five bands that describe levels of achievement; students will move up the rubric bands as they complete the course. As such, the rubric bands are objective and test-independent, so they provide a good way for students to gauge their progress over time.

For each assessment, however, a student will be given a raw score. This score is the number of marks they have earned for their answers in any given test, and it is based on the markscheme prepared *in advance* by the teacher. Marks are aligned with how well the student's response demonstrates proficiency in terms of the rubric bands (we provide guidance on how to write markschemes in this chapter). Marks and their markschemes are objective, in that they are not affected by the overall performance of the class, but they are test-dependent, in that each assessment will have its own mark scheme. That being said, mark schemes should be similar between assessments as assessment formats should be constant.

Finally, after each assessment, the teacher may provide a letter grade for each standard. The letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F with plus or minus marks) is determined by the teacher based on how well the student does relative to their peers or relative to the teachers' expectations for the class. Grade boundaries are set by the teachers after students take the assessment. In this sense, it is a subjective performance indicator and should be test-dependent. Teachers may decide whatever grading scheme they feel is appropriate.

On the next page, we provide an ordered-list for assessment development and marking protocols.

1. Teachers access and review the rubric prepared by STEP;
2. Teachers review the sample assessments and mark schemes provided by STEP;
3. Teachers develop their own summative or unit assessments based on the principles of the STEP Teacher Guide;
4. Teachers prepare and finalize mark scheme documents (which include correct/acceptable answers for the assessments) before the assessment is administered;
5. Teachers administer the assessment;
6. Teachers mark the assessment using the principle of triangulation grading (see the chapter on marking assessments) and following the mark scheme;
7. Teachers meet to calibrate students' raw scores and set grade boundaries;
8. Teachers award grades and provide feedback (a sample reporting template is included in the resources chapter) to students.