



Westfield Academy KS3 step descriptors for English

Year 8

Step No.	Step name	Step descriptor
Step 5	Excelling	<p>Reading skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to use the full range of strategies to fully decode the texts studied (short stories from around the world, modern fiction, character and voice poetry, Animal Farm and another Shakespearean comedy 'Much Ado About Nothing', Shrek) and the writer's craft.• Concise, relevant embedded quotations and textual details develop the student's fluent and convincing arguments. There is full and independent exploration of the writer's craft and intentions leading to astute perceptions and interpretations indicating a strong aptitude for impressive deduction and inference. Students may be able to engage in debates about cultural bias and other higher-level ideas in their written compositions, which are full, thorough and perceptive. Students might demonstrate here an awareness that meanings of texts are negotiated/not fixed and that multiple interpretations can exist at once.• Writes about characterisation, setting(s), and theme(s) in a written composition in detail with assured and perceptive reference to textual details to support a point or points of view <p>Writing skills:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Demonstrates coherence in relation to purpose, form and formality throughout written compositions and is able to meet the needs of the audience with distinctive and effective use of stylistic features. By step 5 students can explain similarities and differences in conventions of different types of writing with precision. ● Written compositions are organised and sequenced for deliberate effect. Links between ideas and paragraphs are fluent and imaginative. A wide range of challenging, irregular and/or technical vocabulary is used to evoke particular responses and reactions from readers. Punctuation is used with precision in order to have an impact upon the reader. <p>Spoken language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students are assured leaders when it comes to the use of Standard English in a wide range of formal and informal discursive contexts including classroom discussion, giving short speeches and presentations, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point, participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said, improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact.
Step 4	Mastering	<p>Reading skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Able to use a wide range of strategies to decode the texts studied (short stories from around the world, modern fiction, character and voice poetry, Animal Farm and another Shakespearean comedy 'Much Ado About Nothing', Shrek) and the writer's craft. ● Retrieval of information from the text is apt and supportive of the main arguments the student is aiming to capture in their written composition. The way quotations are embedded in arguments is confident and clarifies meaning. Students are able to explain in detail both literal and figurative meanings behind a text without falling into the pitfall of describing the meanings. Students begin to understand different readers/audiences react to texts in different ways and use these ideas to enhance their answer. Students are able to weave contextual details throughout their written compositions to strengthen their argument. Students are able to make accurate and interesting inferences and deductions in relation to textual details and/or the writer's craft and/or the writer's intentions. By Step 4, students may be able to engage with ambiguities in a text.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can confidently and concisely explain characterisation, setting(s), and theme(s) in a written composition in detail with textual details to support a point or points of view. As compared with Step 3, in Step 4 there is an expectation that there would be fewer irrelevant ideas and/or details. <p>Writing skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can produce a composition demonstrating wholly confident awareness of the audience, form and purpose of the writing in a detailed and completed composition that fully meets all expectations of that style of writing i.e. there are no features omitted or errors such as an incorrect or absent sign off for a letter. Can confidently explain the differences between different forms of writing and can create a template for that writing style independently. • A range of sentence types are used to interest and perhaps even challenge the reader. A wide range of punctuation is used to create deliberate effects and to manage pace and style of writing. Paragraphs run seamlessly into one another so that connections between ideas are clear and effective. Written compositions are complete (that is to say, not left unfinished or incomplete). Vocabulary is used to have an impact and is broad and varied. Comma splicing is irregular. • Students can confidently use the vocabulary taught by the teacher throughout the course of the year and begin to make connections across units. Students can give accurate explanations of the meanings of words and their contexts (in relation to im/proper use). At Step 4, it's clear students have a love of reading beyond the classroom and are able to use more than the vocabulary explicitly taught by their teacher. <p>Spoken language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can speak confidently and effectively, including through: using Standard English confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion, giving short speeches and presentations, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point, participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said, improvising, rehearsing and performing play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact.
Step 3	Securing	Reading skills:

- Able to demonstrate strategies to decode the texts studied (short stories from around the world, modern fiction, character and voice poetry, Animal Farm and another Shakespearean comedy 'Much Ado About Nothing', Shrek) and the writer's craft.
- Not only able to retrieve information from texts studied and to embed their quotations in their arguments but can now begin to explain in some detail the literal meanings behind a text and begin to engage with some of the complexities in a text, although this may still slip into description sometimes. Has a secure awareness of how the context of production has affected the text studied although this sometimes might look like students 'bolting on' contextual details at the end of a paragraph in Step 3.
- Can explain characterisation, setting(s), and theme(s) in a written composition in detail with textual details to support a point or points of view.

Writing skills:

- Can demonstrate a secure awareness of the audience, form and purpose of writing and sustain this across a composition with detail. Familiar with conventions expected for different modes and forms of writing and can recall these and explain them when prompted. No longer reliant on the teacher to provide a template or prompt although will still benefit from teacher's verbal feedback for instance on the style and content of the written composition.
- Able to write with some deliberate use of features such as the use of specific techniques to engage the reader at particular or climactic moments. Reader can follow the sequence of writing with ease as the student uses paragraphs and discourse markers well. Spelling is usually accurate including the spelling of less common words. Only occasional comma splicing with most punctuation and demarcation being accurate with the overall result that punctuation now begins to clarify meaning as compared with the skills expected in Step 1 and Step 2.
- Can use a range of vocabulary taught in class and remember vocabulary across units, beginning to make connections between words and their application and their contexts.

Spoken language:

- Uses Standard English with some confidence in a range of formal and informal contexts.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can give short presentations and speeches, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point • Can participate in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said • Can improvise, rehearse and perform play scripts and poetry in order to generate language and discuss language use and meaning, using role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact
Step 2	Developing	<p>Reading skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to decode features of the societies studied (short stories from around the world, modern fiction, character and voice poetry, Animal Farm and another Shakespearean comedy 'Much Ado About Nothing', Shrek) and aspects of the writer's craft. • Can retrieve information from texts studied when prompted and begin to understand more than literal meanings with some engagement in more complex ideas, although this often turns into description rather than explanation or analysis. Not only can the student identify the origins of a text, but they can describe how this is seen in the writing. A fair understanding of the plot and word classes achieved. • Can comment on characterization, setting(s) and/or theme(s) in written compositions in some detail which may be descriptive in nature but with textual details to support a point of view. <p>Writing skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and ideas are beginning to meet the needs of the audience, form and purpose in both creative writing and nonfiction with less irrelevant information than might be expected of someone who is establishing their writing skills in the level below. Can write different forms of texts when provided prompts and/or templates from the teacher, but is able to recall the features of a particular form when questioned e.g. recalls some of the features of an article during the course of the year, but might sometimes forget others without the provision of a prompt/template from the teacher. • Clear order established in writing with paragraphs linking together ideas. Accurate use of punctuation to indicate boundaries and accurate use of a broader range of vocabulary including correct spelling of common polysyllabic words.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can describe the experience of living in a dystopian text from the point of view of a fictionalised character with some good use of imagination and creativity. ● Can describe the meaning of a range of vocabulary and describe when to use and not use particular vocabulary. <p>Spoken language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use Standard English to express information, ideas and opinions in formal and informal contexts ● Can repeat ideas and summarise ideas and participate in a debate ● Can read a text aloud, discuss or perform a scene from a text with some understanding of how role, intonation, tone, volume, mood, silence, stillness and action to add impact.
Step 1	Establishing	<p>Reading skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Able to identify, sort/match features of the societies studied (short stories from around the world, modern fiction, character and voice poetry, Animal Farm and another Shakespearean comedy 'Much Ado About Nothing', Shrek) and the writer's craft e.g. how the writer has used a particular adjective. ● Can retrieve simple information from texts studied, understand literal meanings, identify the origins of a text, its main plot and basic word classes. ● Shows an awareness of reading for meaning although some errors may appear or persist. ● Can identify and retrieve quotations to support an idea in relation to characterisation, setting(s) and/or theme(s) and apply this in a brief written response <p>Writing skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can express some information and ideas suitable for audience, form and/or purpose - both creative writing and nonfiction. Typically the student who is establishing these skills might not remember the rules for writing a particular type of text (e.g. an article) across the year and require reminders from the teacher and the provision of a template.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has some command of basic punctuation and can use simple vocabulary with some accurate spelling and some accurate use of paragraphs• Can write to imitate some of the features expected for a dystopian text• Identifies the purpose, audience, form and formality of a text, especially in a sort/match activity• Can recall vocabulary taught by teacher• Can order information so that written compositions have a beginning, middle and end <p>Spoken language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can express information, ideas and opinions in formal and informal contexts• Can repeat what has been said and express a simple idea in response• Can assist with and contribute to a presentation and speeches e.g. in a group/pair setting• Can read a text aloud with simple intonation, emphasis and volume
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Mastery in KS3 English

A learner's progress in KS3 English will be categorised as:

Step 5	Excelling
Step 4	Mastering
Step 3	Securing
Step 2	Developing
Step 1	Establishing

A student might demonstrate different competence in different aspects of the English curriculum but overall descriptions of a student at the five different stages are:

Step 1 - Establishing A pupil will...	Step 2 - Developing A pupil will...	Step 3 - Securing A pupil will...	Step 4 - Mastering A pupil will...	Step 5 - Excelling A pupil will...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have been taught this skill and likely be reliant on an adult to support them in their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit skills they already know and begin to improve these through practise and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate consistency across time in the application of their skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) outlined in the national 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently achieve the KPIs outlined in the national curriculum.

<p>development of this skill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be given opportunities to develop. ● Be supported by an adult. ● Sometimes be able to apply the skills learnt independently or with the provision of additional prompts/template s/resources. ● Likely be in the early stages of language acquisition. 	<p>through proofreading, editing and revising written compositions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Show gradual increases in understanding across time and grow in confidence with less reliance on additional support. ● Be able to produce written compositions independently with some frequency although may still like the occasional use of a prompt/template. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be able to proofread, edit and revise their written compositions with some independence. ● Show a range of evidence from across the curriculum. 	<p>curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consistently proofread, edit and revise their written compositions with independence. ● Show a deeper understanding of the curriculum and connections across the curriculum. ● Aspire to take risks and apply their knowledge and understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have the ability to apply their knowledge across the curriculum without explicit teaching.
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Jargon buster:

In the table descriptors for each step, the language can perhaps feel a little dense. The table below takes some of these terms and simplifies them so that you can engage with them more easily and effectively.

Step descriptors jargon busting table	
Reading comprehension	
Decoding a text	This term refers to a pupil's ability to read and understand the various elements in a text - how words are said, what they mean, recognising patterns in words and so on. It can also refer to their ability to explain and make deductions from the information provided by a text e.g. to understand that a character who is described as having a frown on their face is unhappy or in a bad mood.
The author's methods	This is the term used to refer to the writer's craft - in other words, how the writer has put the text together (how the text is sequenced and arranged) and the various stylistic choices made by the writer. Sometimes this might require an understanding of word classes, but overall it is about recognising that particular choices the writer has made have an overall impact on the reader reaction to the text.
POV	Abbreviation for point of view.
Embedded quotations.	<p>Embedded quotations refers to the skill of retrieving quotations from a text in order to make your argument more reliable and convincing. It refers to a particular style of academic writing. See the example below where the evidence is just 'dumped' after the student's argument, with no clear indication of where the evidence came from or how the two sentences are connected:</p> <p>Don't do this...</p> <p>In his poem London William Blake highlights the misery life in the city can cause. 'Marks of weakness,</p>

	<p>marks of woe’.</p> <p>Instead use these...</p> <p>The Colon Quotation In his poem London William Blake highlights the misery life in the city can cause: ‘Marks of weakness, marks of woe’.</p> <p>The Comma Quotation In his poem London William Blake highlights the misery life in the city can cause when the poem reads, ‘Marks of weakness, marks of woe’.</p> <p>The That Quotation In his poem London William Blake highlights the misery the city can cause when he explains that it produces ‘marks of weakness, marks of woe’.</p> <p>But, best of all... In his poem London William Blake highlights the ‘woe’ that life in the city can cause and the way in which this can almost seem to leave behind a physical ‘mark’. The use of ‘mark’ suggests...</p>
Concise/relevance	<p>In English, it is not just about being able to produce a good quantity of written work in a composition. It is important that the ideas expressed are relevant to the question being asked. Even if the work produced is accurate in an empirical (factual) sense, if students do not engage with the question asked their response will be limited. Students must learn the exam skill of refining and filtering the ideas their teachers have taught to apply them to the question under examination.</p>
<p>Writing</p>	
Comma splicing	<p>What Is a Comma Splice? A comma splice is a particular kind of comma mistake that happens when you use a comma to join two</p>

independent clauses. Here's an example:

Koala bears are not actually bears, they are marsupials.

How can you tell that's a comma splice? Look at the group of words before the comma.

Koala bears are not actually bears

Did you notice that this group of words can stand by itself as a complete sentence? That means it's an independent clause.

Now look at the group of words after the comma.

They are marsupials

This group of words can also stand by itself as a complete sentence. It's another independent clause.

When you have two independent clauses, a comma is not strong enough to glue them together.

How to Fix a Comma Splice

There are three common ways to fix a comma splice. Let's look at a new example:

I am not angry with you, I am not happy with you, either.

Fix #1: Add a Conjunction

One way to fix a comma splice is to add a conjunction immediately after the comma. With most comma splices, the conjunction you'll want to add is probably and, but, or so.

I am not angry with you, but I am not happy with you, either.

Fix #2: Change the Comma to a Semicolon

If adding a conjunction doesn't seem to work, you can change the comma to a semicolon instead. Unlike

commas, semicolons are strong enough to glue two independent clauses together.

I am not angry with you; I am not happy with you, either.

If you decide to use a semicolon, make sure there is a close, logical connection between the two independent clauses.

Fix #3: Make Separate Sentences

If adding a conjunction doesn't seem to work and using a semicolon feels too stuffy, you can fix a comma splice by simply making each independent clause a separate sentence.

I am not angry with you. I am not happy with you, either.

More Examples of Comma Splices

Are you getting the hang of it? Here are a few more examples of comma splices and possible corrections.

I'm thinking of skipping the gym, it's really boring.

Adding a conjunction like and or but after the comma in the sentence above doesn't really make sense. But there does seem to be a close, logical connection between the first independent clause (I'm thinking of skipping the gym) and the second independent clause (it's really boring). This is the perfect situation for a semicolon.

I'm thinking of skipping the gym; it's really boring.

You could also break those two independent clauses apart and make them separate sentences.

I'm thinking of skipping the gym. It's really boring.