

How to Read the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts

The ELA Standards are organized into three main sections: a comprehensive K–5 section; and two content area–specific sections for grades 6–12, one for ELA and one for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. In addition, three appendices accompany the main document.

Each section is divided into strands. The K–5 and 6–12 ELA Standards have Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language strands. The 6–12 history/ social studies, science, and technical subjects section have Reading and Writing strands only. The Reading strand has two components: Reading Literature and Reading Informational Texts. Additionally, in grades K-5 there are Reading Foundational Skills standards, which are directed toward fostering students’ understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English writing system.

Each of the strands (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language) is linked to a strand-specific set of College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards. These anchor standards are identical across all grades and content areas. Although the Standards are divided into strands, they should be seen as an integrated approach to literacy in which cross-strand teaching occurs. Similarly, research and media skills are embedded throughout the ELA Standards rather than treated in a separate section.

Standards for each grade within K–8 and for grades 9–10 and 11–12 follow the CCR anchor standards in each strand. Each grade-specific standard corresponds to the same-numbered CCR anchor standard, providing grade-appropriate end-of-year expectations. The example below illustrates how the college and career anchor standards relate to the ELA standards.

English Language Arts Standards » Anchor Standards » College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

The K–5 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature » Grade 1

Standards in this strand:

RL.1.1 | RL.1.2 | RL.1.3 | RL.1.4 | RL.1.5 | RL.1.6 | RL.1.7 | RL.1.8 | RL.1.9 | RL.1.10

Key Ideas and Details

- RL.1.1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- RL.1.2. Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.
- RL.1.3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

Individual CCR anchor standards can be identified by their strand, CCR status, and number (R.CCR.1, in the example above, represents Standard 1 under key ideas and details). Individual grade-specific standards can be identified by their strand, grade, and number (or number and letter, where applicable), so that RL.1.1, in the example above, stands for Reading, Literature, grade 1, standard 1.



Appendices A, B, and C

Appendix A contains supplementary material on reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language as well as a glossary of key terms. Appendix B consists of text exemplars illustrating the complexity, quality, and range of reading appropriate for various grade levels with accompanying sample performance tasks. Appendix C includes annotated samples demonstrating at least adequate performance in student writing at various grade levels.

Key Features of the Standards

Reading: Text complexity and the growth of comprehension

The Reading standards place equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read. Standard 10 defines a grade-by-grade “staircase” of increasing text complexity that rises from beginning reading to the college and career readiness level. Whatever they are reading, students must also show a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of text, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts.

Writing: Text types, responding to reading, and research

The Standards acknowledge the fact that whereas some writing skills, such as the ability to plan, revise, edit, and publish, are applicable to many types of writing, other skills are more properly defined in terms of specific writing types: arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives. Writing Standard 9 (“Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research”) stresses the importance of the writing-reading connection by requiring students to draw upon and write about evidence from literary and informational texts. Because of the centrality of writing to most forms of inquiry, research standards are prominently included in this strand, though skills important to research are infused throughout the document.

Speaking and Listening: Flexible communication and collaboration

Including but not limited to skills necessary for formal presentations, the Speaking and Listening standards require students to develop a range of broadly useful oral communication and interpersonal skills. Students must learn to work together, express and listen carefully to ideas, integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources, evaluate what they hear, use media and visual displays strategically to help achieve communicative purposes, and adapt speech to context and task.

Language: Conventions, effective use, and vocabulary

The Language standards include the essential “rules” of standard written and spoken English, but they also approach language as a matter of craft and informed choice among alternatives. The vocabulary standards focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, and their nuances and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.