



Writing in EYFS: What English Subject Leaders Need to Know

The EYFS framework is structured very differently to the national curriculum as it is organised across seven Areas of Learning rather than subject areas. This document aims to help subject leaders understand how the skills and knowledge developed across EYFS form the foundations of the national curriculum subjects.

It shows which statements from the non-statutory guidance, Development Matters, are prerequisites for writing within the national curriculum. EYFS settings may choose to use other guidance instead of Development Matters and may decide on different statements as the prerequisites. The table below outlines the most relevant statements taken from the Early Learning Goals in the EYFS statutory framework and from the Development Matters age ranges for three and four-year-olds and reception to match the programme of study for writing.

The most relevant statements for writing are taken from the following Areas of Learning: The most relevant statements for spoken language are taken from the following Areas of Learning:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Literacy
- Expressive Arts and Design

Writing: Transcription Spelling

Phonics and Spelling Rules

Three and Four-Year-Olds	Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing. For example: writing a pretend shopping list that starts at the top of the page; writing 'm' for mummy.
Reception	Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spell words by identifying the sounds and then writing the sound with the letter/s. • Write short sentences with words with known letter-sound correspondences using a capital letter and a full stop.

Writing: Transcription Handwriting

Letter Formation, Placement and Positioning

Three and Four-Year-Olds	Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use large-muscle movements to wave flags and streamers, paint and make marks. • Use one-handed tools and equipment, for example, making snips in paper with scissors. • Use a comfortable grip with good control when holding pens and pencils. • Shows a preference for a dominant hand.
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	Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write some letters accurately.
Reception	Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop their small motor skills so that they can use a range of tools competently, safely and confidently. Suggested tools: pencils for drawing and writing, paintbrushes, scissors, knives, forks and spoons. Use their core muscle strength to achieve a good posture when sitting at a table or sitting on the floor. Develop the foundations of a handwriting style which is fast, accurate and efficient.
	Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form lower case and capital letters correctly.
ELG	Physical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases.
	Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.

Writing: Composition

Planning, Writing and Editing

Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know many rhymes, be able to talk about familiar books, and be able to tell a long story.
	Literacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary. Use some of their print and letter knowledge in their early writing. For example, writing a pretend shopping list that starts at the top of the page; writing 'm' for mummy. Write some or all of their name. Write some letters accurately.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to develop complex stories using small world equipment, like animal sets, dolls and dolls houses, etc.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn new vocabulary. Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences. Describe events in some detail. Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities, and to explain how things work and why they might happen. Listen to and talk about stories to build familiarity and understanding. Retell the story, once they have developed a deep familiarity with the text, some as exact repetition and some in their own words. Use new vocabulary in different contexts. Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.
	Literacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form lower case and capital letters correctly. Spell words by identifying the sounds and then writing the sound with the letter/s. Write short sentences with words with known letter-sound correspondences using a capital letter and a full stop. Re-read what they have written to check it makes sense.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop storylines in their pretend play.
ELG	Literacy	Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed. Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters. Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

	Expressive Arts and Design	Being Imaginative and Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with peers and teachers.
Awareness of Audience, Purpose and Structure			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a wider range of vocabulary. Be able to express a point of view and to debate when they disagree with an adult or a friend, using words as well as actions. Start a conversation with an adult or a friend and continue it for many turns. Use talk to organise themselves and their play: "Let's go on a bus... you sit there... I'll be the driver."
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn new vocabulary. Use new vocabulary throughout the day. Describe events in some detail. Use talk to help work out problems and organise thinking and activities, and to explain how things work and why they might happen. Develop social phrases. Use new vocabulary in different contexts.
ELG	Communication and Language	Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussion, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary. Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate. Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

Writing: Vocabulary, Grammar and Punctuation

Sentence Construction and Tense

Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand 'why' questions, like: 'Why do you think the caterpillar got so fat?' Develop their communication, but may continue to have problems with irregular tenses and plurals, such as 'runned' for 'ran', 'swimmed' for 'swam'. Use longer sentences of four to six words.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn new vocabulary. Use new vocabulary throughout the day. Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences. Connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives.
ELG	Communication and Language	Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate. Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including the use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions with modelling and support from the teacher.

Use of Phrases and Clauses

Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use longer sentences of four to six words.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate their ideas and thoughts in well-formed sentences.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives.
ELG	Communication and Language	Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including the use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions with modelling and support from the teacher.
Poetry and Performance			
Three and Four-Year-Olds	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sing a large repertoire of songs. Know many rhymes, be able to talk about familiar books, and be able to tell a long story.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in simple pretend play, using an object to represent something else even though they are not similar. Begin to develop complex stories using small world equipment like animal sets, dolls and dolls houses, etc. Remember and sing entire songs. Sing the pitch of a tone sung by another person ('pitch match'). Sing the melodic shape (moving melody, such as up and down and down and up) of familiar songs. Create their own songs, or improvise a song around one they know.
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in story times. Retell the story, once they have developed a deep familiarity with the text, some as exact repetition and some in their own words. Learn rhymes, poems and songs.
	Expressive Arts and Design		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sing in a group or on their own, increasingly matching the pitch and following the melody. Develop storylines in their pretend play.
ELG	Literacy	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary.
	Expressive Arts and Design	Creating with Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of props and materials when role playing characters in narratives and stories.
		Being Imaginative and Expressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invent, adapt and recount narratives and stories with their peers and their teacher. Perform songs, rhymes, poems and stories with others, and (when appropriate) try to move in time to music.
Non-Fiction			
Reception	Communication and Language		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in non-fiction books. Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary.
ELG	Communication and Language	Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate.
	Literacy	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play.