GLOSSARY OF TERMS
ENGLISH

This glossary captures some of the terminology used to describe student learning in **English**.

This resource aims to provide parents with some definitions of ***key terms*** encountered in a child's written report or at parent-teacher interviews.

The **bold** terms are the **focus areas** as represented in NSW English Syllabus.

Word / Phrase	Definition
complex sentence	Formed by adding one or more dependent (subordinate) clauses to a main (independent) clause using subordinating conjunctions and/or relative pronouns.
compound sentence	A sentence comprising 2 or more independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction.
Creating written texts	Content in Creating Written Texts focus on the knowledge and skills in text creation, print conventions, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, spelling and handwriting. As learning progresses, creating written texts focuses on the coordination of many elements and processes.
cvc word	Words formed by a consonant-vowel-consonant. For example, cat, bag, pen.
decodable text	Texts that are made up of grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs) that students have learnt. These texts are used by beginning readers to practise segmenting and blending skills to read words, quickly and effortlessly.
decode	A process of efficient word recognition in which readers use knowledge of the relationship between letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) to work out how to say and read written words.
Digital transcription	Transcription skills involve handwriting and using digital tools to produce texts.
digraph	Two graphemes used to represent one phoneme. Examples include: - consonant digraphs – sh, ck, th - split digraphs – a-e, i-e, o-e - vowel digraphs – ee, oo, ea.
encode	Spell words in their visible written form.
etymology	The origins of, and changes to, words in relation to meaning. Words derived from earlier or other languages, place names, words derived from people's names, coinages. Eg *Repertoire* is from the French language.

figurative language	Word groups/phrases used differently from the expected or everyday usage to express an idea in a non-literal way for a particular effect.
fluency	Reading, speaking, encoding and spelling with appropriate pace and accuracy.
genre	The categories into which texts are grouped based on similarities in premise, structure and function. The 'genre' of a text describes larger recurring patterns of subject matter and textual structures observable between texts, such as typical plots, characters and setting. 'Genre' can also describe categories of form and structure in texts.
grapheme	The smallest unit of writing used to represent one phoneme. A letter or combination of letters corresponding to or representing a single phoneme. Examples include: • the *f* in *frog* • the *ph* in *phone* • the *gh* in *cough*
Handwriting	Handwriting is the formation, size, spacing, position and placement of alphabetic letters on a page.
high frequency word	Words that appear often in written texts.
hybrid texts	Composite texts resulting from combining elements from different genres, styles and modes.
idiom	Example: The word *moon* has a non-literal meaning in the idiom, *over the moon*, to infer an emotional state.
inference	A conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning.
literature	A category of text that holds personal, social, cultural or aesthetic value. Literature comprises a dynamic range of fiction and nonfiction texts from diverse historical and cultural contexts.
mental model	A mental representation of the information in a real or an imaginary world. A student develops a mental model as the text progresses. It may include information derived from inferences and from background knowledge as well as from what is explicitly stated in the text itself.
metalanguage	Technical terms used to describe and discuss how language and texts function.
metaphor	Example: The metaphor *the snow is a white blanket* alludes to something soft in its comparison of snow to a blanket.
morpheme	The smallest unit of meaning in a word. For example, jumps has 2 morphemes: jump + s.
morphological generalisation	A spelling term that describes the manipulation and control of a particular base or root word when it is affixed with a prefix and/or suffix.

multimodal	A text that combines 2 or more expressive modes to communicate.
multisyllabic words	Words of 2 or more syllables.
Oral language and communication	Content in Oral language and communication focuses on speaking and listening. For some students who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, this will be through signing and watching Auslan as well as, or instead of, speaking and listening.
phoneme	The smallest unit of speech sound. Examples include: • Cat has 3 phonemes: c/a/t • Truck has 4 phonemes: t/r/u/ck.
Phonic knowledge	The ability to decode and encode words using knowledge of grapheme–phoneme relationships.
Phonological awareness	The ability to hear, identify and say the separate parts of words (syllables, onsets, rimes and phonemes).
prefix	A bound morpheme made up of letters that appear before a base word to make a new word. For example, *un-* in 'unhappy' means 'not' (un + happy = not happy).
Print conventions	Print conventions are understandings about how print works in texts and the environment.
prosody	Reading with expression using correct phrasing, intonation and attention to punctuation.
Reading fluency	Reading fluency refers to the ability to read words in text accurately, effortlessly, at an appropriate rate, with phrasing and expression that reflect the meaning of the passage.
Reading comprehension	Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read both during and after reading. As learning progresses, comprehension includes problem-solving and critical thinking about texts.
rhetorical questions	A question that is asked to provoke thought rather than require an answer.
Spelling	Spelling is a set of conventions for written language regarding how letters (graphemes) should correspond to the sounds of spoken language.
suffix	A bound morpheme comprising a letter or group of letters that attach to a base word to make a new word. Examples include: • The *-s* in *dogs* is an inflected suffix that marks plurality. • The derivational suffix, *-ion* can be added to the end of the verb, *protect*, to form the noun, *protection*.

syllable	A unit of sound within a word that contains a vowel phoneme and feels like one 'beat'. For example: • A word with 3 syllables is *won-der-ful*.
tier 1 words	Basic-level, everyday words. For example, dog, baby, happy, pretty, was, come, said.
tier 2 words	General academic words that can be used across a variety of domains. They are of high utility for mature language users and are commonly used in written language. Tier 2 words add power and precision to written and spoken language but many Tier 2 words are most commonly found in written language. For example, contradict, precede, stale, awful, snuggle.
tier 3 words	Words that are used rarely (low frequency) and only in highly specific situations, eg decibel, cataclysm, atom.
Understanding and responding to literature	The process of reading, listening, questioning, and responding to quality literature provides a foundation for students to engage in reflective and critical thinking.
Vocabulary	Content in Vocabulary focuses on learning and using words.

For additional information about your child's learning in English, parents may like to refer to these guides from NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)

[Supporting your child Parent and Carer guide – English Kindergarten](#)

[Supporting your child Parent and Care guide – English Years 1-2](#)

[Supporting your child Parent and Care guide – English Years 3-6](#)