



When your child's teacher or tutor uses terms like **fronted adverbial**, **inference** or **nominalisation** - it can feel like a foreign language. This glossary explains the key terms clearly, so you can follow your child's progress, understand their feedback and support their preparation with confidence.

Reading and Comprehension

READING

Inference

Working out something the author hasn't directly stated, using clues in the text.

Question: 'What do you think the character is feeling?' - you won't find the word 'scared' in the text, but the clues are there.

READING

Retrieval

Finding information that is directly stated in the text - literally 'retrieving' a fact.

Question: 'According to the text, how many years had the house been empty?' - the answer is written there.

READING

Vocabulary in context

Working out what a word means from the words and sentences around it, not from prior knowledge.

Question: 'What does the word desolate mean in this passage?' - use the surrounding text to work it out.

READING

Summarising

Pulling together the main points of a passage briefly and in your own words, without minor detail.

Question: 'Which sentence best summarises what happens in paragraph two?'

READING

Author's intent / purpose

Why the author made a specific word or language choice - what effect they wanted on the reader.

Question: 'Why do you think the author chose the word crept rather than walked?'

Grammar and Sentence Structure

GRAMMAR

Fronted adverbial

A word or phrase at the start of a sentence that tells us how, when or where the action takes place - followed by a comma.

Example: 'Silently, she opened the door.' The fronted adverbial is 'Silently,' - it starts the sentence.

GRAMMAR

Expanded noun phrase

A noun (naming word) with extra description added before or after it - adjectives, prepositions and more.

Example: 'The tall, crumbling tower on the hillside' - this is an expanded noun phrase describing the tower.

GRAMMAR

Coordinating conjunction

A joining word that links two equal ideas or clauses. Remember: FANBOYS - For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So.

Example: 'I wanted to go outside, **but** it was raining.' The word 'but' is the coordinating conjunction.

GRAMMAR

Subordinating conjunction

A joining word that introduces a less important clause - the clause it introduces cannot stand alone.

Example: 'She stayed inside **because** it was raining.' 'Because it was raining' cannot stand alone.

GRAMMAR

Relative clause

A clause that gives extra information about a noun, usually starting with who, which, where, when or whose.

Example: 'The dog, **which had been barking all night**, finally fell silent.' The relative clause adds extra detail.

GRAMMAR

Adverbial

A word or phrase that modifies a verb - telling us how, when, where or how often something happens.

Example: 'She ran **quickly**.' / 'Every morning, he checked the letterbox.' Both are adverbials.

GRAMMAR

Passive voice

When the subject of the sentence receives the action rather than performing it. Used to sound formal or to hide who did something.

Active: 'The dog bit the boy.' **Passive:** 'The boy was bitten by the dog.' - the subject receives the action.

GRAMMAR

Nominalisation

Turning a verb or adjective into a noun - makes writing sound more formal and abstract, especially in non-fiction.

Verb: 'They decided to close it.' **Nominalised:** 'The decision to close it was made.' - 'decided' becomes 'decision'.

Figurative Language

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Metaphor

Saying one thing IS another - not using 'like' or 'as'. Creates a strong image by merging two ideas directly.

Example: 'The classroom was a cage.' Not 'like a cage' - it IS a cage. That's what makes it a metaphor.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Simile

Comparing one thing to another using 'like' or 'as'. Weaker than a metaphor but still creates vivid imagery.

Example: 'Her voice dropped **like a stone** into still water.' The word 'like' makes it a simile.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Personification

Giving a non-human thing human qualities, emotions or actions.

Example: 'The wind **howled and clawed** at the windows.' Wind cannot howl or claw - these are human actions.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Pathetic fallacy

When weather or the natural environment reflects or mirrors a character's mood or the atmosphere of a scene.

Example: 'The sky darkened as she approached the house.' The weather mirrors the ominous mood of the scene.

Writing Techniques

WRITING TECHNIQUE

Show not tell

Conveying a feeling or situation through action, dialogue or physical detail rather than naming the emotion directly.

Tell (weak): 'He was nervous.' **Show (strong):** 'He checked the clock three times. His hands wouldn't keep still.'

WRITING TECHNIQUE

De:De sentence

An Alan Peat sentence type - a description followed by a colon, then another description that elaborates on the first.

Example: 'The corridor was silent: not a footstep, not a voice, not a single sound.' The colon introduces the elaboration.

WRITING TECHNIQUE

Cohesion

How well a piece of writing flows and connects - using pronouns, connectives, topic sentences and varied vocabulary to link ideas.

Good cohesion means a reader never feels lost or confused about how one paragraph connects to the next.

WRITING TECHNIQUE

Discourse markers

Words and phrases used to connect ideas and signal the direction of an argument or narrative - especially in non-fiction.

Examples: 'Furthermore,' / 'On the other hand,' / 'In conclusion,' / 'Consequently,' - all guide the reader through your argument.

NON-FICTION WRITING

PEE (Point, Evidence, Explain)

A structure for writing in non-fiction - make a point, back it up with evidence, then explain what the evidence means.

Point: 'Exercise is essential.' **Evidence:** 'Studies show...' **Explain:** 'This demonstrates that...'

General Terms

GENERAL

Comprehension

Understanding a text - both what it says literally (retrieval) and what it suggests or implies (inference).

Comprehension questions test whether your child can find information AND read between the lines.

GENERAL

Assessment / Selective entry

The exam or entrance test used by independent and grammar schools to select pupils. Also called 'the entrance exam' or '7+/11+ assessment'.

Different schools use different tests - some use CEM, some GL Assessment, some write their own. Always check which format your school uses.