

Literacy Leaders
“We have lift-off”
Key points in our approach

Getting a C in English shouldn't be that difficult after 11 years of schooling. The problem is likely to be related to **self-belief**: these students will think they are rubbish at English. We need to make them realize that they are better than they realize. That's why the relationship with their mentor will be so important.

But it's important also not to patronise them or to make excuses. Therefore: **standards matter**: quality of presentation (these students will often not have rulers for underlining titles, etc. They need one. Insist that written work is well presented.

Small indicators will show how close they are to a C grade. The more they get these things instinctively right, the more likely you will be to help them get the grade they want. So always focus on these **key elements**:

1. Capital letters at the start of sentences and for names need to be secure.
2. Use of paragraphs (3-5 to a page of A4).
3. The longer the sentences, the lower the grade. A good grade C needs a short sentence (“This room is unpleasant”), followed by a longer one (“As I walked in, I knew it would be like arriving at prison”)
4. Connectives raise grades: *as, when, unless, because, although ...*
5. Basic spellings need to be learnt

Teachers sometimes tell students to choose **“interesting words”** or not to use “boring words”. Our students won't know what this actually means. Is “big” less interesting than “large?” Is “enormous” more interesting than “gigantic”? Teachers sometimes imply that longer words are better than shorter words, which is wrong. So the key to vocabulary is words that help us to visualize something. We'll work on demonstrating what this means.

Every session should start and end with a 5-word **spelling** test. Go through any spellings looking for ways of remembering the ones they got wrong (3 ways – visual, aural, mnemonics [=memory devices such as silly rhymes]). Write their final score in their planner and “well done” and your signature. Build success.

Early sessions will consist of language games. These are to build the student's relationship with you. But then, quite quickly, we're going to get into writing skills aimed at helping the in their exams.