

**English Syllabus
for
Grades 9 & 10**

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Rationale

Why do Ethiopian students study English?

English has been retained in the educational system because it is vital to for the economic development of Ethiopia. English is the language of wider communication across the globe in international relations, science and technology, commerce and trade. It is also the medium of instruction for secondary and higher education in Ethiopia

What is the new syllabus based on?

The English syllabus for grades 9-10 is based on the new curriculum framework for Ethiopian schools and on the needs assessment conducted prior to revision work. The syllabus has also considered international content standards for a similar age and grade level of learners

What are the main changes?

The main changes to the previous English syllabus are:

- The content has been reduced and teachers should be able to cover the content in the allotted time.
- The syllabus is based on minimum learning competencies for each grade against which students will be assessed. Each unit provides the content and activities needed to build up students' competency.
- There is spiral progression throughout the four grades of secondary: the four language skills, grammatical and vocabulary items and other language components are taught at increasing levels of difficulty and sophistication within the topic areas. This spiral progression is demonstrated in the minimum learning competences and the topic flow chart.
- The content is relevant to all students whether they are leaving school after grade 10, continuing to grades 11 and 12 or moving into the vocational stream.

1. Psychological preparation

This includes:

- motivating students to learn English by using interesting and enjoyable methods
- learning geared to: communicating in English in both speaking and writing and using the language creatively
- building on learners' natural curiosity and desire to try things out
- taking account of students' capacity for imagination and creativity

- The syllabus demonstrates practical implementation of active learning and learner-centredness. It is designed to inform the production of quality textbooks that will inspire confidence and develop competence in teachers so they can use a broader range of methodologies in their teaching.
- The approach to language teaching is communicative and skills based: students learn and practise language which is meaningful to them and which has a real purpose and context. For this reason the focus is on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Grammar, vocabulary and social expressions are integrated into practice of these skills. Language is about communicating with others and learners are encouraged to interact with each other in a variety of patterns: pairs, groups and plenary. The activities are also designed to encourage students' natural curiosity and appetite for discovery together with enjoyment of learning through debates, surveys, games and stories appropriate to their age.

What is the new approach?

The new approach contains a number of aspects that are demonstrated in the MLCs, the syllabus and its activities

- developing in learners sensitivity to foreign languages and cultures
- raising their awareness of the mother tongue and English
- developing in them a positive attitude to language learning

2. Attitude goals

Attitude is an important aspect of language learning and therefore the new syllabus. Students should want to communicate and find pleasure and confidence in exploring English. They should anticipate or predict what comes next and be willing to 'have a go'. They should not be afraid of taking risks or making mistakes. Finally they should reflect on their actions and learn from them.

4. Lessons and materials

These include activities and tasks that:

- have a clear learning outcome
- can be personalised according to students' interests
- are graded, to facilitate movement from the cognitively simple to the more demanding
- are contextualised and meaningful, with a real purpose and audience in mind
- encourage creative, productive and enjoyable use of language
- are designed to enable increasing student independence and choice
- stimulate learners
- engage students' minds and keep them occupied
- allow students to respond to language input by doing
- provide opportunities for interaction to develop fluency
- enable teachers to choose a style that suits the mood
- cater for different modes of learning: verbal, visual, musical, logical, physical, interpersonal etc
- vary work on the same topic
- vary the organisation of learning (students working in pairs, groups, plenary)
- reuse materials for a different purpose
- repeat patterns (e.g. words or phrases) which promote learning
- repeat rhythms that reinforce English sounds, stress and intonation

3. Content goals

Content is both topic-based and linguistic. Topics have been chosen that are interesting and enjoyable, relevant to Ethiopian life and complementary to what students are studying in other subjects. All four language skills are developed equally and language chosen is functional, relevant and realistic for teenagers.

What are the main features of the syllabus?

1. Minimum Learning Competencies

The Minimum Learning Competencies (MLCs) are the skill levels we expect all the students to have reached within each topic at the end of each grade. Some students will demonstrate abilities beyond the MLCs.

2. Topic flow chart and content map

The topic flow chart shows the spiral progression of the competencies within a number of topics. The content map shows the content to be learnt in each unit at each grade.

3. Units and period allocation

Each grade is broken up into a number of units based around a topic. Competencies in language and skills are built up within a topic as topics recur a number of times throughout the 4 grades of secondary.

In both grades 9 and 10 there will also be four revision units. These units will provide teachers and students with opportunities to recycle language and skills and assess competencies. In these units there should be a variety of activities across the skills and integrated tasks to practise and assess what has been learnt. Activities should be enjoyable and engaging but should also include examples of national test types such as multiple choice.

Each unit is divided into 11 of periods based on a 34-week school year. Regular, short slots of language learning during the week are likely to be more effective than a longer, more concentrated slot once a week. In grades 9 and 10 students will have 4 periods of English per week.

Below is the proposed period allocation across the units. However, while teachers should ensure they finish the syllabus, exact period allocation is flexible. Teachers should respond to the needs of their students in different skills and topics.

Grade 9 (4 periods a week)

Units 1-12	11 periods (each)
Revision units	4 periods (in total)
Total periods	136

Grade 10 (4 periods a week)

Units 1-12	11 periods (each)
Revision units	4 periods (in total)
Total periods	136

4. Learning outcomes, language focus and vocabulary

Each unit starts with a learning outcome related to the topic and which is applicable across the skills. Each unit also has a language focus divided into grammar, vocabulary and social expressions. The grammar focus will be the main structures/items that are revised or introduced in the unit. The vocabulary focus lists the main topic areas of vocabulary and social expressions are the main functional structures.

For vocabulary, examples of words in the topic areas can be found at the end of each grade. It is important to stress that these are only suggested examples. Teachers can choose relevant lexical items from this list and add items appropriately. Students do not have to learn all the words from the list. Students should also be encouraged to keep vocabulary notebooks. (See Learning Strategies).

Teachers should recycle grammar, vocabulary and social expressions as much as possible. This can be done through speaking activities, games, tests etc. at the beginning and end of lessons.

5. Competencies

The left hand column of the syllabus lists the relevant competencies for each unit. These are derived from the Minimum Learning Competencies for each grade. Teachers use these competencies to assess students (see assessment).

6. Skills

For clarity of focus each unit of the syllabus is broken up into

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Additional Learning Strategies

It is important to stress that this is not the order in which activities should be conducted. Indeed over the course of the 11 periods per unit teachers should provide a variety of skills practice both within and between lessons.

Some activities do need to precede others: listening and speaking activities often provide the context for the introduction of new vocabulary, grammar or social expressions. In addition to this, activities in different skills are often connected and may need to be followed consecutively e.g. reading texts often provide models for writing activities. However, although textbook writers and teachers need to bear this in mind, they are free to conduct the activities in the order that will best suit their classes and give variety. Moreover, they are also free to adapt and change the activities as they see fit as long as the relevant Minimum Learning Competencies are met. If textbook writers or teachers need suggestions on a possible order of activities for each unit, the Curriculum Department will be happy to provide it.

7. Learning Strategies

Learning strategies (or study skills) are the skills students need not only to improve their competency in English and therefore their ability to access other subjects through the medium of English, but also to improve their ability to learn generally. The aim of developing learning strategies is for students to understand how they learn and ultimately for them to become independent learners.

In the primary English syllabus many activities focused on developing the sub-skills needed in each of the four main language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In reading for example the sub-skill of predicting the content of texts was a minimum learning competency from grade 4 onwards.

Grades 9 and 10 continue to develop these linguistic sub-skills which are reflected in the Minimum Learning Competencies and practised through a variety of activities. What is different is that the secondary syllabus contains additional activities which aim to make these sub-skills explicit to the students. These activities give them the opportunity to discuss and assess their strengths and weaknesses in each skill/sub-skill as well as try out new ways of learning. Moreover, the syllabus also extends learning strategies to the areas of vocabulary and grammar. For example students try out different ways of recording vocabulary in their notebooks and reflect on which is most appropriate and effective. They also discuss the issue of making grammatical mistakes and how this is a necessary stage in becoming better communicators. Finally, the syllabus for grades 9 and 10 also incorporates activities which aim to improve generic study skills such as being aware of their individual learning styles and time management.

It is hoped that this focus on learning strategies in English will help students to cope with the English speaking environment at Secondary school as well as give them vital skills for future studies in any subject.

8. Language Content/items

On each page of the syllabus the middle column of content/language items contains the grammar, language patterns, social expressions, vocabulary or text type to be learnt in each unit to build up students' competency within each topic and skill area. Examples of the language items students are expected to produce or respond to in order complete an activity are also given in this column. These are located across the skills but more often appear under listening or speaking as the communicative approach would generally expect them to be introduced in these skills first. Teachers should clearly present the new language within context and check understanding before proceeding to the practice activities. Under reading and writing, the language content also contains the text type (such as sentences, paragraphs, newspaper article, story, descriptive passage etc.) the students will be working with.

9. Language activities and resources

The third column contains activities and resources for the teacher to use with students to facilitate learning of the corresponding content/ language items and build up the corresponding competencies. The resources that are needed are included in the activities.

As mentioned above, the syllabus is not set out in the order it should be followed. However, when students are introduced to new language items, controlled practice of these discreet items should precede freer speaking activities. This is to give the students the chance to practise the meaning, use and manipulation of the target language.

Occasionally there are suggestions for activities which may not be possible in all classes, these are 'optional'. However, as with all the activities, teachers are free to adapt them to meet the needs or situations they face.

With all the skills students should be encouraged to work on activities in a variety of interaction patterns: pairs, threes, small groups, larger groups and plenary. For listening and reading activities students should check and compare their work together, practising their English as they do so. For reading, students should read aloud in pairs and small groups rather than reading silently. The skill of writing is as much about process as product. Indeed Secondary English follows the six stages of writing model (think/brainstorm, plan, draft, check, rewrite, proofread) and students must be encouraged to follow this model both individually and in pairs/groups for every writing activity.

10. Assessment

Teachers are expected to assess students on a continuous basis. Many of the activities can be used for assessment as well as practice. Teachers should keep records of student performance in class and regularly take in notebooks to mark work and record achievement. At the end of each unit there are suggested assessment activities, some of which are taken from the unit (mainly for writing) and some of which are additional.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, each grade will have four revision units which will also provide the teacher and students with opportunities for assessment. It is not only the teacher who can assess; students should also be encouraged to do self and peer assessment activities.

11. Assessing speaking

Assessing speaking is vital for providing feedback to the students and for informing schemes of work and lesson plans. Ensuring that students are aware of their competencies and how they can improve their language is also essential now that English is the medium of instruction for other subjects.

Assessing speaking should not be formal or intimidating. The teacher should just listen in on pairs and groups, provide them with feedback and record progress. The teacher should not focus on mistakes but rather on whether the students have reached the competency level and can be understood. This means the focus is on communicating the intended message not fluency or accuracy.

In large classes assessing speaking can be challenging. Below are some ideas to address these challenges and provide the teachers with at least one assessment opportunity per child per term.

- At the beginning of each term, the teacher divides the class into speaking/assessment groups (of about 10 students) according to where they sit in the class (this can be rows or groups of students whichever is more practical). For all speaking activities, students form pairs, threes or groups within these groups. For assessment the teacher concentrates on one group per week. He/she can assess a number of students each lesson and record comments.
- In each grade there are a number of activities where students are working in small groups. As long as the teacher is satisfied that discipline will not be affected, students can be pulled out of these activities to be assessed for speaking.
- Some of the writing activities may take a lesson or two. Once more the teacher could listen to 10 pairs of students perform a speaking/listening activity in this time.

12. Assessing writing

Assessing writing is vital for the same reasons as assessing speaking. However with large classes it can often be burdensome and challenging to mark. The following are some ideas:

- Develop marking schemes to use when correcting e.g. letters/symbols such as 'Sp', 'T' or ^ which denote the type of mistake ('Sp' = spelling mistake, 'T' = tense and ^ = missing word) but not the actual correction. Students then correct the mistakes for themselves or with partners. This process takes a lot less time and encourages student awareness of the mistakes they are making.

- Teachers don't need to correct everything – indeed some days teachers may just focus on one area e.g. tenses or vocabulary so that students hone in on these areas of the language.
- Students should be encouraged to check their own and others' writing before they hand in work. This follows the 6 stage model of writing (think/brainstorm, plan, draft, check, rewrite, proofread) and encourages them to become more independent learners.
- For some assignments students can work in pairs or groups and be assessed as a pair or group. This strategy will cut down the marking considerably but must be used in conjunction with assessing students individually.
- Assess students in class time as they are doing writing activities (using the 6 stage model) – success is just as much about process as product

13. Assessing listening and reading

Assessing the receptive skills is also vital, especially since students' access to other subjects is mainly through these skills. Teachers can assess the competencies for listening and reading both informally and formally. Continuous assessment can take place as the students are doing the activities and through regular checking of their notebooks. More formal assessment should be done through the end of unit assessment activities and in the revision units.

Assessing listening and reading is not too time-consuming as exercises can be devised that are easy to mark. However teachers do need to ensure that all the range of competencies are being assessed and that what they are assessing is reading or listening i.e. if it is note-taking that is being assessed, it is the skill of understanding the content that is key not the quality of the notes made.

14. What is the difference between primary and secondary English in Grades 9 and 10?

There are a number of differences between primary English and secondary English in grades 9 and 10. Firstly students are now studying through the medium of English. It is therefore crucial that English classes develop students' subject survival skills, confidence and learning strategies. Secondly students will have come to secondary from a range of different schools and backgrounds and will be a more diverse group. For these reasons the focus in grades 9 and 10 is on revision and extension of what students covered at primary rather than introducing a range of new language items. Another difference is that topics, texts, vocabulary and activities are more directly linked to other school subjects and reflect the national focus on Science and Technology. For reading and listening there is also much more of a focus on authentic materials.

The syllabus for grades 9 and 10 also presumes that when they finish, most students will continue to use English, either in grades 11 and 12, at college or in the world of work. For this reason there is a focus on communication and through the development of learning strategies, independent learning. Finally, at secondary, students should begin to take more responsibility for their own learning. The syllabus therefore encourages students to use on-site facilities such as libraries, reading boxes and computer rooms (if appropriate) and access the English speaking environment wherever possible. This can be done through setting up reading logs, research tasks, inviting speakers etc.