

English Level 8

Chapter 2 — Language: expressing and developing ideas

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Clause structures, including embedded clauses, that expand ideas

Chapter 2 · Language: expressing and developing ideas

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Language · Language for expressing and developing ideas

Content description

VC2E8LA05 — Students learn to: *examine a variety of clause structures, including embedded clauses, that add information and expand ideas in sentences* (Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0, English, Level 8, VCAA).

Elaboration links

.E01 evaluating how speechmakers influence audiences through embedded clauses to add information · .E02 exploring how clauses and embedded clauses can be used to express ideas more succinctly. These are VCAA’s advisory examples only; the content description above is what this section teaches.

Modes

Reading and Viewing — examining how clause structures add information in texts · Writing — using clause structures to expand ideas in your own texts.

A sentence that holds one clause makes one point. A sentence that holds several clauses can pack a whole scene into a single line. This section teaches the clause structures that do that packing — and how to read and use them.

The idea

1. Clauses, main and dependent. A **clause** is a group of words built around a verb. Some clauses can stand alone as a full sentence: *The crowd cheered*. These are **main clauses**. Other clauses cannot stand alone; they lean on a main clause to make sense: *when the final bell sounded*. These are **dependent clauses**. A main clause plus one or more dependent clauses makes a **complex sentence** — a sentence shape you met in Level 7, now with the parts named so you can control them.

2. Embedded clauses — this section’s focus.

A note on the term. The Victorian Curriculum uses the term *embedded clause* but does not define it. This section therefore treats an **embedded clause** as *a clause that sits inside another clause — it cannot stand alone as a sentence, and it is placed inside, or between parts of, a main clause to add information*. Every task in this section is answerable on that definition alone. Other grammar books draw the line in different places; in this section, use the definition above.

Notice what the definition means: an embedded clause does not sit at the front or the back of a sentence by default. It is **tucked inside** — often splitting the main clause in two — and it hands extra information to the reader right next to the noun it belongs to.

*The captain, **who had trained all winter**, lifted the trophy.*

Remove the bold clause and the sentence still works: *The captain lifted the trophy*. That is the test. An embedded clause can be lifted out, and the sentence around it still stands.

3. The clause structures this section works with. Embedded clauses are one family of clause structures. Here are the five you will meet in this section, with the job each does:

Five clause structures that expand ideas

Structure	Signal	Job	Sample (written for this book)
Relative clause	who · which · that · whose · where · when	adds information about a noun	<i>The trophy that the team won sits in the front office.</i>
-ing clause	verb + -ing	adds an action or description to a noun or clause	<i>The students cheering by the gate waved first.</i>
-ed clause	past form of a verb (usually -ed)	adds a description to a noun	<i>The flags raised at dawn stayed up all day.</i>
to-infinitive clause	to + verb	tells the purpose of something, or what is to be done with it	<i>We set out chairs to sit on.</i>
Adverbial clause	when · because · although · if · while · since ...	does the job of an adverb: tells when, why, how, or under what condition	<i>When the final bell sounded, the crowd stood.</i>

The four warm rows sit inside the clause they expand — they are embedded clauses.

The adverbial clause leans on the sentence from the edge instead.

Table of five clause structures with their signal words, jobs and sample sentences

Structure	Signal	Job	Sample (written for this book)
Relative clause	starts with <i>who, which, that, whose, where, when</i>	adds information about a noun	<i>The trophy that the team won sits in the front office.</i>
-ing clause	verb + -ing	adds an action or description to a noun or to the whole clause	<i>The students cheering by the gate waved first.</i>
-ed clause	past form of a verb (usually -ed)	adds a description to a noun	<i>The flags raised at dawn stayed up all day.</i>
to-infinitive clause	to + verb	tells the purpose of something, or what is to be done with it	<i>We set out chairs to sit on.</i>
Adverbial clause	starts with <i>when, because, although, if, while, since</i> ...	does the job of an adverb: tells when, why, how, or under what condition	<i>When the final bell sounded, the crowd stood.</i>

The first four sit inside the clause they expand — they are **embedded clauses**. Adverbial clauses are dependent clauses too, but they usually sit at the edge of a sentence rather than inside it. All five are **clause structures that add information and expand ideas**, which is what VC2E8LA05 asks you to examine.

Two small but important details about relative clauses:

- A relative clause that adds **extra** information takes commas: *Ms Nguyen, **who drove the bus**, also trained the juniors.* (You already know who Ms Nguyen is; the clause is a bonus.)
- A relative clause that tells you **which one** takes no commas: *The bus **that Ms Nguyen drove** was blue.* (The clause picks out which bus.)

4. Where an embedded clause can sit. The same embedded clause can go in three positions, and each position changes the rhythm of the sentence and what the reader notices first:

The same embedded clause in three positions

START

Carrying the flag,	the team walked into the hall.
--------------------	--------------------------------

The detail lands first; the main action arrives late.

MIDDLE

The flag,	carried by the captain,	led the team into the hall.
-----------	-------------------------	-----------------------------

The sentence slows down around the noun.

END

The team walked into the hall	carrying the flag.
-------------------------------	--------------------

The main action comes first; the detail rides along after it.

Same scene, three rhythms — position is a choice writers make on purpose.

Three sentences showing an embedded clause in starting, middle and ending position

Position	Sample	What it does
Start	<i>Carrying the flag, the team walked into the hall.</i>	The detail lands first; the main action arrives late, and the reader waits for it.
Middle	<i>The flag, carried by the captain, led the team into the hall.</i>	The sentence slows down around the noun; the reader sits with the detail for a moment.
End	<i>The team walked into the hall carrying the flag.</i>	The main action comes first; the detail rides along after it.

5. Why writers and speakers bother. Four reasons, and this section's tasks keep returning to them:

1. **More information, same sentence.** The reader gets the detail *and* the main point in one move.
2. **Detail sits next to its noun.** No loose ends, no “which one?” confusion.
3. **Flow.** Sentences stop sounding like a list of separate facts.
4. **Influence.** A speaker can slip a feeling, a picture or a reason into the middle of a sentence before the audience has decided what to think.

Worked examples

Example 1 — read a sentence like a clause map (scaffolded)

Mentor sentence (sample, written for this book):

The captain, who had trained all winter, lifted the trophy that her team had won together.

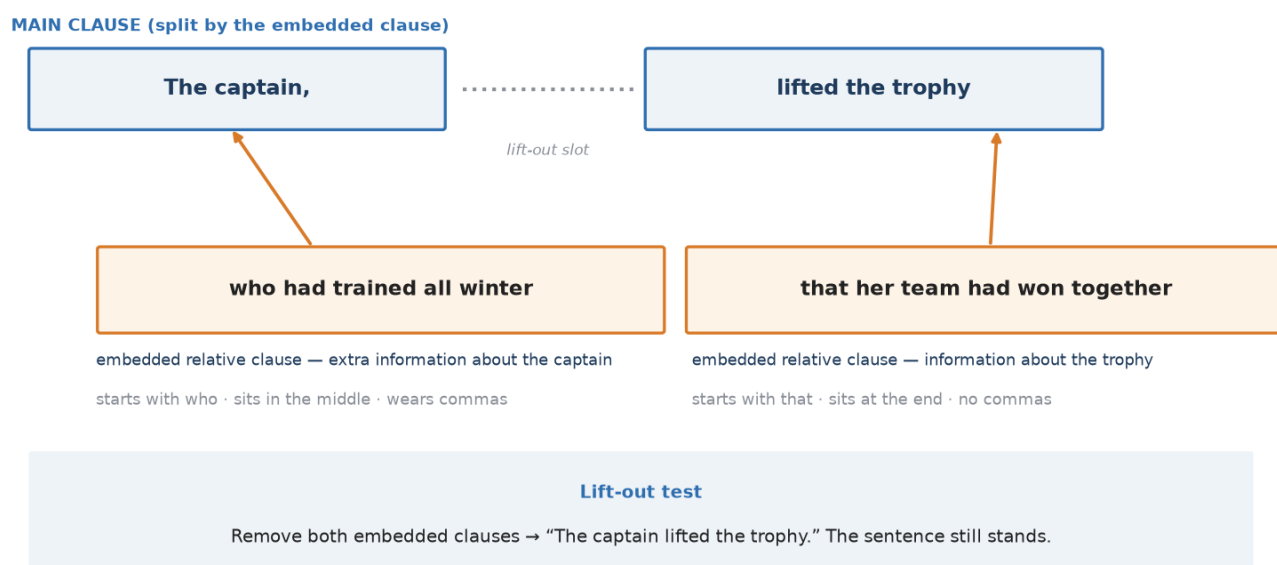
Find every clause, working step by step:

Step	Working	Comment
1. Find the verbs.	<i>had trained, lifted, had won</i>	Three verbs, so up to three clauses.
2. Find the main clause.	<i>The captain ... lifted the trophy ...</i>	It stands alone as a sentence, so it is the main clause.

Step	Working	Comment
3. Spot the first embedded clause.	<i>who had trained all winter</i>	Starts with <i>who</i> ; adds extra information about <i>the captain</i> ; sits in the middle; wears commas.
4. Spot the second embedded clause.	<i>that her team had won together</i>	Starts with <i>that</i> ; adds information about <i>the trophy</i> ; sits at the end; no commas.
5. Apply the lift-out test.	<i>The captain lifted the trophy.</i>	Both embedded clauses lift out and the sentence still stands.

Clause map of the mentor sentence

"The captain, who had trained all winter, lifted the trophy that her team had won together."



Clause map of the mentor sentence showing the main clause and two embedded relative clauses

One sentence, one main point, two extra pieces of information — the reader learns about the winter training and the team's win without a second sentence starting.

Example 2 — combine choppy sentences into one rich sentence (scaffolded)

This is elaboration .E02 in action: clauses can express ideas **more succinctly** — more facts, fewer words.

Choppy version (sample, written for this book):

The garden sits behind the library. Students planted it in spring. It grows vegetables. The kitchen uses the vegetables in school lunches.

Four facts, four sentences, 22 words. Combine them, step by step:

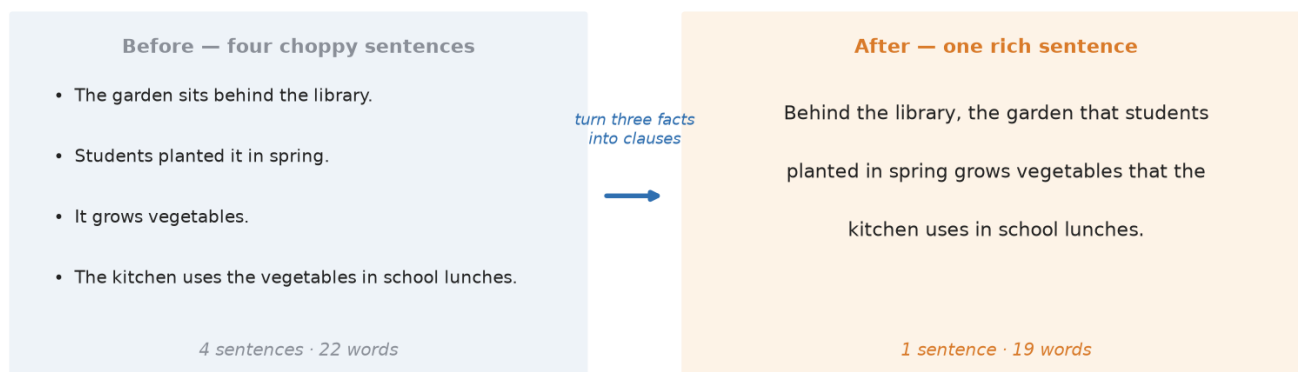
Step	Working	Comment
1. Pick the main clause.	<i>The garden grows vegetables.</i>	Choose the fact the others hang off.
2. Turn fact 2 into a relative clause.	<i>the garden that students planted in spring</i>	Attaches to <i>the garden</i> .
3. Turn fact 1 into a starting clause.	<i>Behind the library, ...</i>	A short position clause sets the scene.
4. Turn fact 4 into a clause about the	<i>vegetables that the kitchen uses in</i>	Attaches to <i>vegetables</i> .

Step	Working	Comment
vegetables.	<i>school lunches</i>	
5. Check every fact survived.	behind library ✓ · students planted in spring ✓ · grows vegetables ✓ · kitchen uses them in lunches ✓	A combine that drops a fact is not finished.

Combined version: *Behind the library, the garden that students planted in spring grows vegetables that the kitchen uses in school lunches.*

One sentence, four facts, 19 words — and no idea lost.

Combining choppy sentences — same facts, fewer words



Fact check — did every idea survive the combine?

- ✓ the garden sits behind the library
- ✓ students planted it in spring
- ✓ it grows vegetables
- ✓ the kitchen uses the vegetables in school lunches

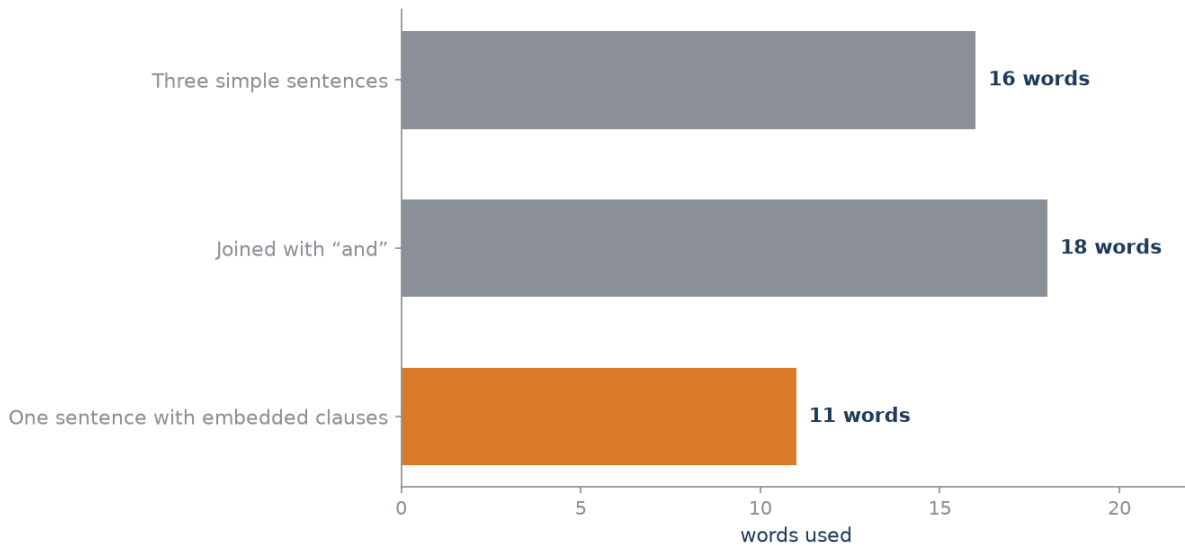
A combine that drops a fact is not finished.

Before and after comparison of the choppy sentences and the combined sentence with a fact check

How much can this save? Here is the same three ideas told three ways:

Version	The sentences	Words	Ideas kept
Three simple sentences	<i>Mia found a cat. It was hiding under the stage. The stage was behind the hall.</i>	16	3
Joined with <i>and</i>	<i>Mia found a cat, and it was hiding under the stage, and the stage was behind the hall.</i>	18	3
One sentence with embedded clauses	<i>Mia found a cat hiding under the stage behind the hall.</i>	11	3

Same three ideas, three ways — words needed



All three versions keep the same three ideas — embedded clauses: fewer words, same ideas. That is succinct.

Bar chart comparing word counts of three versions of the same three ideas

Embedded clauses gave the third version the fewest words with all three ideas kept. That is the economy they offer: **same ideas, shorter text, tighter flow.**

Evaluating a speech: how embedded clauses influence an audience

Elaboration .E01 asks you to evaluate how speakers use embedded clauses to add information and influence an audience. Speeches are the best place to see why. A speaker gets one pass — the audience cannot re-read — so a good speech packs detail into clauses and lets the audience hold everything at once.

Read this extract from a sample speech, written for this book. The school captain is speaking at an assembly, asking the school to help run a welcome morning for new families.

Thank you for coming, students, staff and families. The hall **that we stand in** was built by volunteers — people **who gave up their weekends** so this school would have a home. Next term, new families **arriving from overseas** will walk through our gates, carrying stories we have not yet heard. The welcome morning we are planning — games **to play**, food **to share**, names **to learn** — is our chance to say one thing: you belong here. So I am asking each of you, whoever you are in this school, to give just one hour.

(Sample text — written for this book.)

Sample speech extract — the embedded clauses at work

School captain, assembly — asking for help with a welcome morning (sample text written for this book)

Thank you for coming, students, staff and families.

The hall **that we stand in** was built by volunteers — people **who gave up their weekends** so this school would have a home.

Next term, new families **arriving from overseas** will walk through our gates, carrying stories we have not yet heard.

The welcome morning we are planning — games **to play**, food **to share**, names **to learn** — is our chance to say one thing: you belong here.

So I am asking each of you, whoever you are in this school, to give just one hour.

What each highlighted clause does in the speech

that we stand in	relative clause	pins “the hall” to this school — shared ground
who gave up their weekends	relative clause	paints volunteers as people who gave their time
arriving from overseas	-ing clause	puts a long journey inside “new families”
to play · to share · to learn	three to-infinitive clauses	make the welcome morning feel full, warm and possible

Each clause adds information the audience did not ask for — and each one shapes how the audience feels about the ask.

Model speech extract with its embedded clauses highlighted and labelled by job

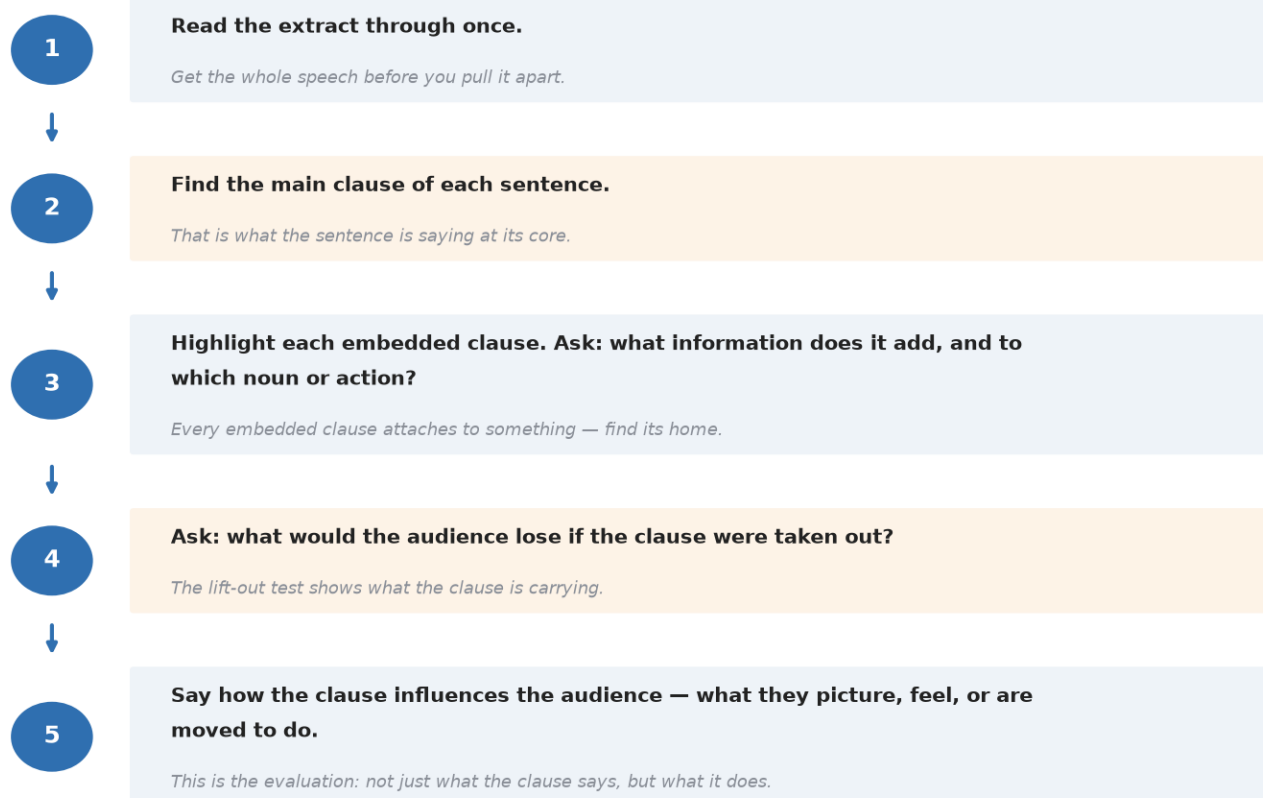
Three of those clauses, evaluated:

1. **who gave up their weekends** — a relative clause tucked after *volunteers*. It turns a plain label into a picture: real people giving up their rest. The audience feels the size of the gift — and starts to feel that giving is what this community does.
2. **arriving from overseas** — an -ing clause tucked after *new families*. It places a long journey inside the noun. Before the main verb arrives, the audience has already pictured families travelling a long way. The welcome mood is built before the ask is made.
3. **games to play, food to share, names to learn** — three to-infinitive clauses in a row. The repeated shape makes the event feel full, warm and possible. Three small pictures are painted in the space of one clause.

Notice the pattern: each embedded clause **adds information the audience did not ask for**, and each one quietly shapes how the audience feels about the ask that comes at the end. That is the influence. A speaker who used only plain main clauses would give the audience facts; this speaker gives them pictures, feelings and a reason.

When you evaluate a speech, work through these steps:

Evaluating embedded clauses in a speech — five steps



Five-step flow for evaluating embedded clauses in a speech

Practice tasks

Scaffolded practice

Q1. *The crowd cheered when the final bell sounded.* Identify the main clause and the dependent clause. Which one could stand alone as a sentence?

Q2. Match each clause in the left column to its structure in the right column.

Clause	Structure
a. <i>who waved from the finish line</i>	i. -ed clause
b. <i>waiting for the race to start</i>	ii. to-infinitive clause
c. <i>printed on yellow paper</i>	iii. relative clause
d. <i>to hand to the winners</i>	iv. -ing clause

Q3. In each sentence, decide whether the embedded clause sits at the **start**, in the **middle**, or at the **end**. a. *The trophy, polished until it shone, sat on the table.* b. *Worn out by the season, the team still smiled for the photo.* c. *We followed the path that wound through the trees.*

Q4. Expand this sentence by adding a relative clause after *library*: *The library stayed open in the holidays*. Use commas if your clause adds extra information, and no commas if it tells the reader which library.

Q5. Combine these two sentences into one using an embedded clause: *Mia found a cat. It was hiding under the stage*.

Q6. Add commas where they are needed: *Our coach who drove the bus also made the sandwiches*. (Hint: you already know which coach — the clause adds extra information.)

Independent practice

Q7. Combine these four choppy sentences into one rich sentence. Keep every fact: *The shed stands next to the gym. The coach stores gear in it. The gear belongs to the juniors. The juniors train on Tuesdays*.

Q8. Read the extract below (sample, written for this book). Find two embedded clauses and state the information each one adds.

The letter, signed by every captain in the school, asked for one change: training lights that work in winter. The council, which meets next week, has the request on the list for its next meeting.

Q9. Write two sentences about a match, a concert or an event you know well. In the first, use an embedded clause at the **start** of the sentence. In the second, use one in the **middle**.

Q10. A speaker could say “*The hall was built by volunteers. They gave up their weekends.*” or “*The hall was built by volunteers who gave up their weekends.*” Give two reasons a speaker might choose the second version when speaking to a live audience.

Product task — an analytic response

Write an analytic response of 5–7 sentences about the welcome-morning speech extract above. Your response must:

- identify two embedded clauses from the extract, quoting them;
- for each one, explain what information it adds and to which part of the sentence it attaches;
- explain how each clause influences the audience — what the audience pictures, feels, or is moved to do.

Use the five-step flow in the figure above, and this frame if you want one:

In the extract, the speaker uses the embedded clause “...” to add information about Without it, the audience would only know With it, the audience is led to

Before you hand your response in, check it against the list:

Before you hand it in — checklist

- ☐ Have I quoted two embedded clauses from the extract?
- ☐ Have I said what each clause adds, and to which noun or action it attaches?
- ☐ Have I said what the audience pictures, feels or does because of each clause?
- ☐ If I lifted each quoted clause out, would the sentence around it still stand?
- ☐ Have I placed commas around any middle clause that adds extra information?
- ☐ Does each of my own sentences flow when I read it aloud?

Two clauses quoted • information named • influence explained.

Student editing checklist for writing with embedded clauses

Check	Question to ask
Two clauses quoted	Have I quoted two embedded clauses from the extract?
Information named	Have I said what each clause adds, and to which noun or action?
Influence explained	Have I said what the audience pictures, feels or does because of each clause?
Lift-out test	If I removed each quoted clause, would the sentence around it still stand?
Commas	Have I placed commas around any middle clause that adds extra information?
Read-aloud test	Does each of my own sentences flow when read aloud?

Where to next: Section 2E teaches semicolons and dashes — another set of tools for extending ideas in sentences.

Answers

Q1. Main clause: *The crowd cheered* (it stands alone). Dependent clause: *when the final bell sounded* (it cannot stand alone).

Q2. a → iii (relative clause — starts with *who*); b → iv (-ing clause); c → i (-ed clause); d → ii (to-infinitive clause).

Q3. a. middle; b. start; c. end.

Q4. Sample answers — extra information, with commas: *The library, which the council runs, stayed open in the holidays.* Which-library, no commas: *The library that stayed open in the holidays was the one next to the hall.*

Q5. Sample answer: *Mia found a cat that was hiding under the stage.* or *Mia found a cat hiding under the stage.*

Q6. *Our coach, who drove the bus, also made the sandwiches.* The clause adds extra information about someone the reader already knows, so it wears commas.

Q7. Sample answer: *In the shed next to the gym, the coach stores the gear that belongs to the juniors, who train on Tuesdays.* Many correct answers are possible; the test is that all four facts survive in one sentence.

Q8. Sample answers: *signed by every captain in the school* — an -ed clause adding information about *the letter* (every captain backed it); *which meets next week* — a relative clause adding information about *the council* (the wait is short); *that work in winter* — a relative clause adding information about *training lights* (the problem is winter). Any two with the right job explained.

Q9. Answers will vary. Check that the first sentence starts with an embedded clause (e.g. *Worn out by the final, the team still celebrated.*) and the second carries one in the middle (e.g. *The captain, holding the trophy, led the cheer.*).

Q10. Sample reasons: (1) one clause carries both facts at once, so the audience holds them together instead of stitching two sentences; (2) the second version sounds less choppy and keeps the speech moving — important when the audience cannot re-read; (3) the added clause lands next to *volunteers*, so the audience feels the size of the gift at the moment the word lands.

Nominalisation and its effect on content and tone

Curriculum: Victorian Curriculum 2.0 English, Level 8 — Language for expressing and developing ideas. This section teaches content description VC2E8LA06: students learn to “understand the effect of nominalisation in texts”. Tasks are keyed to VCAA elaborations .E01 (“highlighting examples of nominalisation in a range of texts, including informative texts, and explaining the impact on content and tone”) and .E02 (“nominalising relevant verbs in a series of sentences and discussing the impact of the change in tone on potential audiences”). Every sample text in this section is original — written for this book and labelled as a sample.

Theory

Same news, two voices. Here is one event reported in two ways. Read both versions, then notice how they feel.

Version 1: *The council decided to close the pool. Many locals were angry.*

Version 2: *The council’s decision to close the pool caused anger in the local community.*

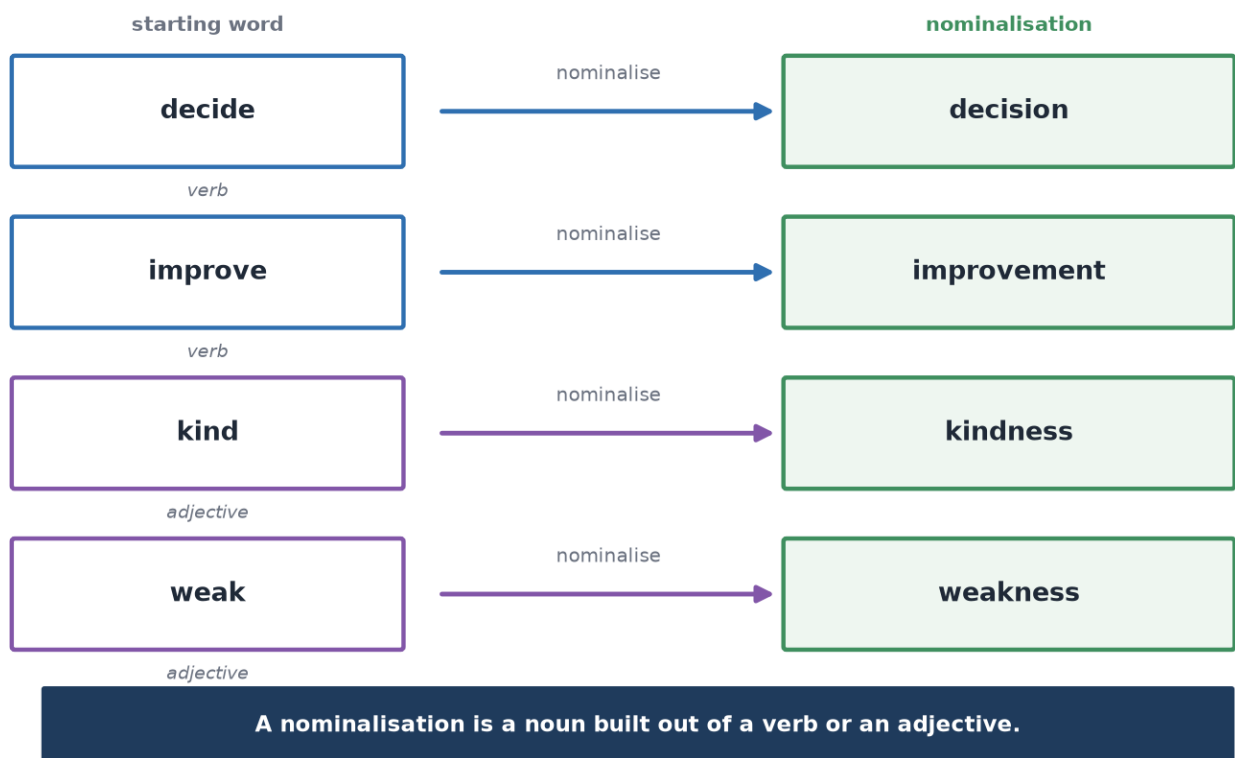
Both versions report the same event. Version 2 feels more formal and more official. A big part of that feeling comes from one small grammar move:

- *decided* (a verb) has become **decision** (a noun)
- *angry* (an adjective) has become **anger** (a noun)

The key term. A **nominalisation** is a noun built out of a verb or an adjective. The move itself — turning the doing word or the describing word into a naming word — is called **nominalising**. The word comes from the Latin *nomen*, meaning “name”: you are giving the action or quality a name so it can be talked about like a thing.

What is nominalisation?

A verb or an adjective becomes a noun



A labelled diagram showing nominalisation. Three verbs and adjectives are turned into nouns: decide becomes decision, improve becomes improvement, and kind becomes kindness.

How they are made. Most nominalisations are built by adding a **suffix** — a letter group fixed to the end of a word — to a base word. Figure 2 collects the common suffix families.

Common nominalisation suffix families

Add the suffix to the base word and the doing or describing word becomes a naming word

Suffix	Attaches to	Examples
-tion / -sion	verbs	decide → decision · discuss → discussion
-ment	verbs	improve → improvement · agree → agreement
-ance / -ence	verbs	perform → performance · exist → existence
-al	verbs	arrive → arrival · refuse → refusal
-ure	verbs	fail → failure · mix → mixture
-ing	verbs	flood → the flooding · clean → the cleaning
no change	verbs	change · hope · attack (same shape, new job)
-ity	adjectives	active → activity
-ness	adjectives	kind → kindness · weak → weakness

Sample pairs chosen for this book. Spelling note: the base word sometimes shifts a little (decide → decision, active → activity) — section 4C works on these patterns.

A table of common nominalisation suffixes, showing the suffix, the kind of base word it attaches to, and examples such as decision, improvement, arrival, kindness, activity and failure.

Two more kinds are worth knowing:

- **-ing forms used as nouns:** *The **flooding** spread mud across the oval.* (*flooding* is built from the verb *flood*.)
- **Same-shape nouns:** some words work as both verb and noun with no change at all — *a change, a hope, an attack, a run*. You can only tell which job the word is doing by its place in the sentence.

What nominalisation does to content. Nominalisation changes what a sentence seems to be about.

1. **It packs meaning into fewer words.** A whole clause can be squeezed into one noun. *The council decided* becomes *the decision*. Informative texts use this so a short text can carry a lot of information.
2. **It turns actions into things.** Once *decide* becomes *the decision*, the action becomes an object you can discuss: a decision can be announced, questioned, praised or reversed. This is why nominalisation is so common in reports, rules and textbooks — these texts deal in ideas as things.
3. **It can drop the doer.** The **doer** is whoever performs the action. *Someone damaged the mural* names a doer. *Damage to the mural* keeps the action but the doer has left the sentence. Sometimes that is useful (the doer is unknown or does not matter). Sometimes it quietly hides who was responsible — a reader should notice when that happens.

What changes when a verb becomes a noun?

VERB FORM — the plain version

“Parents planted forty new trees on Saturday.”



nominalise the verb

NOMINALISED FORM — the report version

“The planting of forty new trees took place on Saturday.”

1 The verb becomes a noun

planted → the planting. The action is now a thing the report can talk about.

2 The doer leaves the sentence

Parents drop out. The sentence no longer says who did the planting.

3 A small new verb is added

took place keeps the sentence moving. Small verbs like caused, drew and took place often carry nominalised sentences.

A diagram comparing two versions of one sentence. The verb form names the doer, while the nominalised version turns the action into a noun and the doer disappears from the sentence.

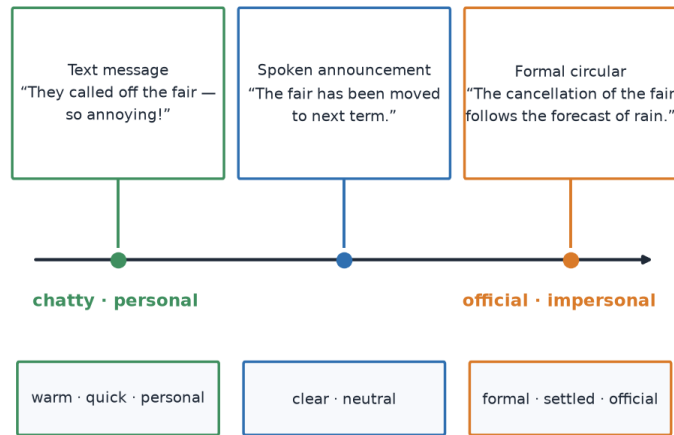
What nominalisation does to tone. The **tone** of a text is the attitude it seems to have — how it “sounds” in your head as you read. Nominalisation usually shifts tone in three ways:

1. **More formal.** *The formation of a working group* sounds more formal than *they set up a group*.
2. **Less personal.** People step out of the sentence, so the writing starts to sound like a report rather than a chat.
3. **More official, more authoritative.** Nominalisation is the voice of news reports, policies and textbooks, so it can make a claim sound weighty and settled.

But watch the other side of the blade. Too much nominalisation makes writing dense, cold and hard to follow, and it can let a writer hide the doer of an action. Nominalisation is a tool, not an upgrade: sometimes the plain verb is the stronger choice (you will weigh this in Q10).

Where does each text sit on the tone scale?

Sample sentences written for this book. More nominalisation pushes a text to the right.



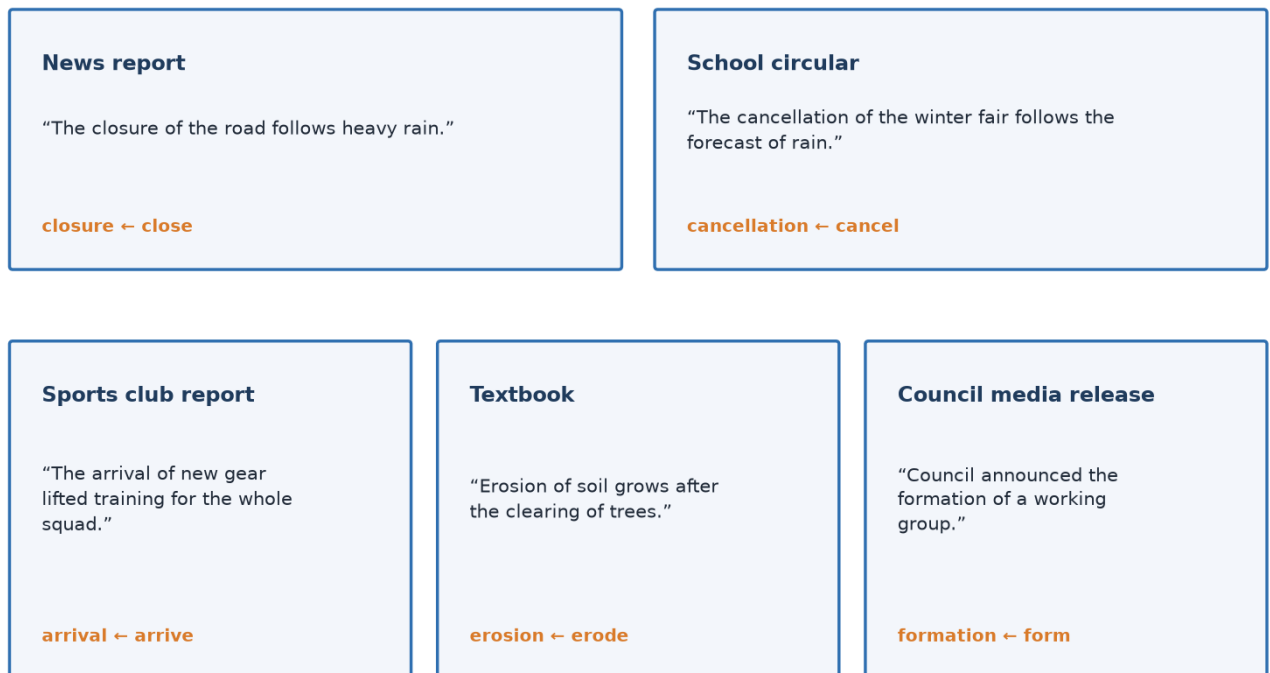
Nominalisation is one of the strongest levers for moving a text along this scale — but a text on the left is not worse than a text on the right. Each fits a different audience and purpose.

A horizontal tone scale running from chatty and personal to official and impersonal, with a text message, a spoken announcement and a formal school circular placed along it.

Where you meet it. Nominalisation is everywhere in informative texts: news reports, school circulars, club and sports reports, textbooks, and council media releases. Figure 5 shows five of these places, each with a sample line written for this book.

Where you meet nominalisation

Five informative text types — sample lines written for this book, each with one nominalisation named

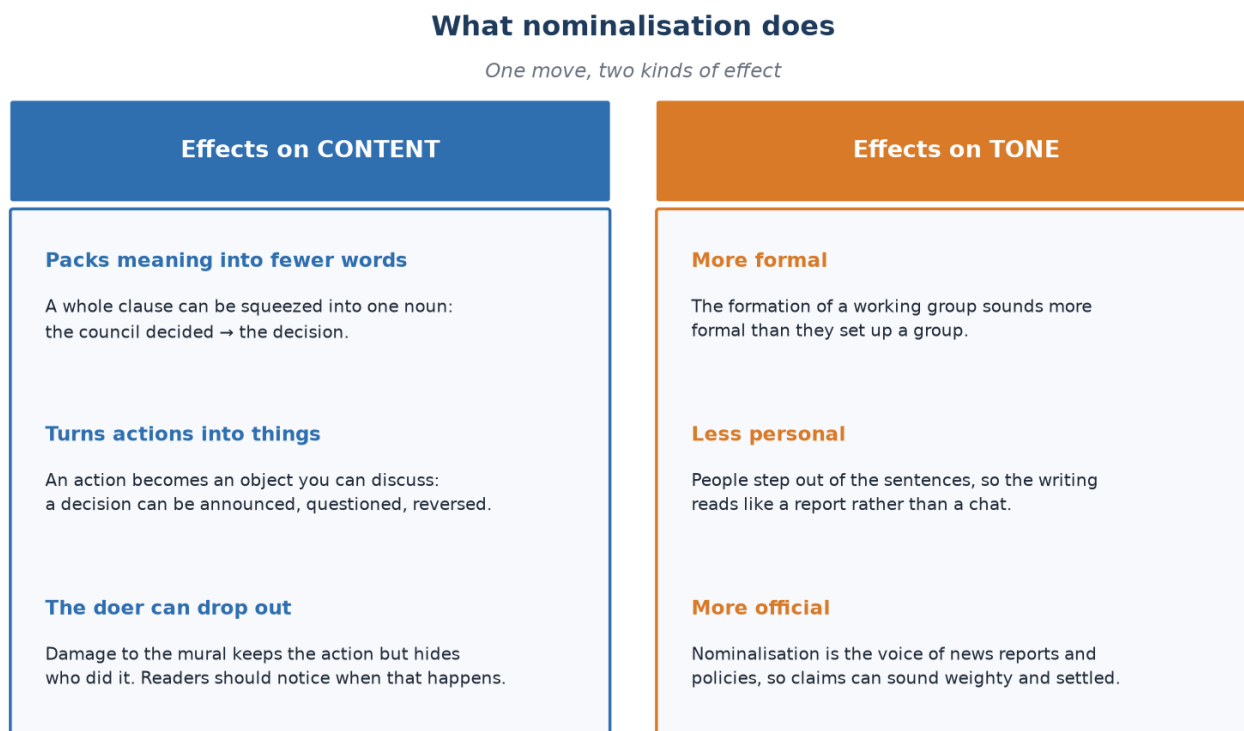


These texts share a job — giving information quickly to many readers — and nominalisation helps them do it.

Five tiles showing text types where nominalisation is common — a news report, a school circular, a sports club report, a textbook and a council media release — each with a sample sentence containing a nominalisation.

A reading move: unpack it. If a dense sentence full of big nouns is hard to follow, run the move in reverse: turn the nouns back into verbs. *The cleaning of the creek* becomes *someone cleans the creek*, and the meaning usually comes clear at once.

Summary. Figure 6 gathers the effects in one place.



A tool, not an upgrade: sometimes the plain verb is the stronger choice.

A summary diagram titled What nominalisation does, with two panels: effects on content — packs meaning into fewer words, turns actions into things, the doer can disappear — and effects on tone — more formal, less personal, more official.

Looking ahead. Nominalisations make up a large share of academic vocabulary, which section 2D explores, and their suffix patterns are worth locking down as spelling families (section 4C). At Level 9, nominalisation returns as a device for linking ideas across whole texts — this section builds the base that work stands on.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded: highlighting nominalisation and explaining its effect

Keyed to elaboration .E01. Below is a short informative text written for this book. It is styled like a council report about a local creek. Figure 7 shows the same text with the nominalisations highlighted.

Creek storm report — sample text (written for this book)

Last spring, **flooding** of the creek damaged the walking track and the picnic area. A **build-up** of rubbish had blocked the main drain, so muddy water spread across the oval. In **response**, the council announced the **formation** of a working group. The group's first tasks are the **cleaning** of the creek and the **planning** of better drains.

Spotting nominalisation — creek storm report

Sample text written for this book

Last spring, **flooding** of the creek damaged the walking track and the picnic area.

A **build-up** of rubbish had blocked the main drain, so muddy water spread across the oval.

In **response**, the council announced the **formation** of a working group.

The group's first tasks are the **cleaning** of the creek and the **planning** of better drains.

[] = a nominalisation: a noun built from a verb, doing the job of packing an action into a thing

The creek storm report passage with its six nominalisations highlighted, and a key explaining that each highlighted word is a noun built from a verb.

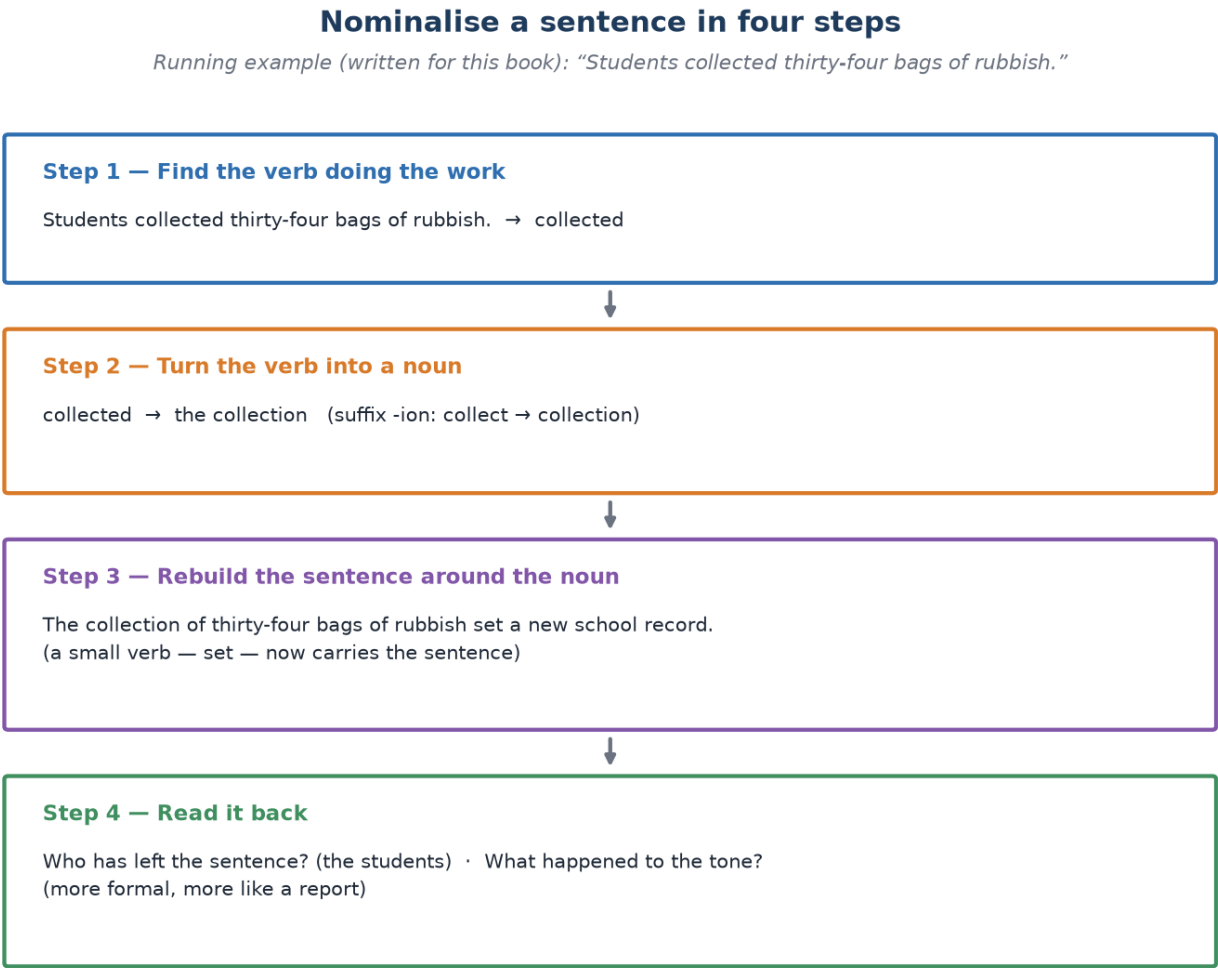
Highlight each nominalisation, name the word it is built from, and explain the effect on content and tone. The first one is done for you.

Nominalisation	Built from	Effect on content	Effect on tone
flooding	the verb <i>flood</i>	Packs “the creek flooded” into one thing the report can talk about and measure.	Reads like a report, not a chat.
build-up	the verb <i>build up</i>	Turns a slow process — rubbish gathering over time — into one named cause.	Factual and calm.
response	the verb <i>respond</i>	Packs the council’s whole reply into a single noun.	Official.
formation	the verb <i>form</i>	Makes the start of the group one named event.	Official. The reader focuses on the group, not on who formed it.
cleaning	the verb <i>clean</i>	Turns the job itself into a task that can be listed and planned.	Businesslike.
planning	the verb <i>plan</i>	Turns future work into a task.	Businesslike.

One more thing to notice: the report never says **who** blocked the drain. The noun form *a build-up of rubbish* keeps the cause but drops the doer. That is a content change and a tone change in a single move — the report stays calm instead of blaming anyone.

Example 2 — scaffolded: nominalising verbs and discussing the shift

Keyed to elaboration .E02. Here are three sentences from a student’s notes about a school working bee. The task is to nominalise the key verb in each one and rebuild the sentence in newsletter style. Figure 8 shows the four-step method.



A four-step flow for rewriting a sentence with a nominalisation: find the verb doing the work, turn it into a noun, rebuild the sentence around the noun, then read it back to check what changed and who has disappeared.

Original sentence (student notes)	Nominalised version (newsletter style)	What changed
Parents planted forty new trees on Saturday.	The planting of forty new trees took place on Saturday.	<i>planted</i> → <i>the planting</i> . The parents disappear; the event itself comes first. Tone: more formal and official.
The judges announced the winning house at noon.	The announcement of the winning house took place at noon.	<i>announced</i> → <i>announcement</i> . The judges leave the sentence; the news now reads like an official record.
Students collected thirty-four bags of rubbish.	The collection of thirty-four bags of rubbish set a new school record.	<i>collected</i> → <i>collection</i> . The students step out; the result takes the spotlight.

Discussing the shift. In each pair, the student notes name the doers — parents, judges, students — while the newsletter versions put the events first and let the people fade. The newsletter style suits the whole school community,

which wants the news quickly and formally. The note style suits someone who was there and wants to remember who did what. Neither version is “better”; each fits a different audience and purpose.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Circle the nominalisations in this list. For each one, write the word it is built from: *decision · quickly · arrival · happiness · failure · bright · kindness · argument · slowly · improvement · government · green.*

Q2. Build the noun. For each base word, write the nominalisation using the suffix shown:

Base word	Suffix	Your nominalisation
decide	-sion	
improve	-ment	
arrive	-al	
kind	-ness	
active	-ity	
fail	-ure	
perform	-ance	
exist	-ence	

Q3. Sort these nominalisations into the columns of a table like Figure 2: *arrival · reaction · kindness · refusal · activity · failure · agreement · existence · improvement · erosion · weakness · mixture.*

Q4. Unpack it. Rewrite each nominalisation as a clause with a doing verb, the way a reader unpacks a dense sentence: (a) *the decision to close the pool* (b) *the cleaning of the creek* (c) *the formation of a working group.*

Q5. Fill each gap with a noun from the bank: **arrival · failure · improvement · decision · excitement.**

- (a) The _____ of the school bus was delayed by twenty minutes.
- (b) After the _____ of the first plan, the group tried a new one.
- (c) There was great _____ in the hall before the school concert.
- (d) The _____ to move the fair indoors kept the event going.
- (e) The team’s _____ this term has impressed the coach.

Q6. Two texts, one story. Text A is the creek report from Example 1. Text B tells the same story to a friend.

Text B — sample text (written for this book)

Last spring it rained hard and the creek flooded. Muddy water wrecked the walking track and the picnic area. Rubbish had blocked the drain, so mud spread all over the oval. The council said it would set up a working group. First they’ll clean the creek, then they’ll plan better drains.

- (a) Which text is more formal? How can you tell?
- (b) Find three nominalisations in Text A.
- (c) Which text tells you who will clean the creek? Quote the words that show this.
- (d) Which text sounds more like a friend talking? Name two features that create that sound.

Un scaffolded

Q7. Here is a student's note about a school concert — sample text written for this book:

The Year 8 singers performed three songs, and the band played two. Ms Lee thanked the parents who helped. The lights failed once, but the show went on.

Rewrite the note as a formal newsletter report. Use at least four nominalisations. Then add one sentence saying what happened to the tone.

Q8. Here is a dense school circular — sample text written for this book:

The early **closure** of the library on Friday follows the **arrival** of new shelves. The **fitting** of the shelves will take place over the weekend. The **reopening** of the library is planned for Monday morning.

Rewrite it as a friendly message for Year 4 students. Turn at least three of the bold nouns back into verbs. Then answer: what was easier to read in your version — and what did the circular's style have that your version lost?

Q9. One pair, two effects. Consider these two sentences:

The students protested.

The protest went ahead as planned.

- What stays the same between the two sentences?
- Name two things that change — one in the content (think about who is in the sentence) and one in the tone.
- The principal and a student journalist both write about this event. Which sentence might each one choose, and why?

Q10. Judge the move. A student says: *"Nominalisation always makes writing better."*

- Give one strong reason someone could agree with the student.
- Give one strong reason someone could disagree with the student.
- State your own position and give a reason for it. You may take either side — marks go to the strength of your reasons, not to which side you pick.

Product task — analytic response

Two texts, one event. Both texts below are about the same school event. Both are original samples written for this book.

Text 1 — school circular

The **cancellation** of the winter fair follows the **forecast** of heavy rain. The **decision** was made after talks with the school council. The fair will now run in Term 3. The school thanks families for their **understanding**, and for the hard work of the fundraising group.

Text 2 — student message

Bad news — they called off the winter fair! It's going to rain heaps on Saturday, so the school said no. They'll run it next term instead. All that hard work from the fundraising crew wasn't for nothing, though — the fair will still happen!

Write one analytic paragraph of 120–150 words comparing how the two texts use nominalisation. Your paragraph must:

- quote at least three nominalisations from Text 1;
- explain what each one does to the content — what is packed in, and who steps out of the sentence;
- compare the tone of the two texts and say which audience each text suits;
- finish with one sentence judging which text is more effective for its purpose, and why.

Checklist before you hand in: three quotations woven into your own sentences · an effect named for each quotation · both texts compared · a judgement with a reason.

Answers

Q1. *decision* (decide), *arrival* (arrive), *happiness* (happy), *failure* (fail), *kindness* (kind), *argument* (argue), *improvement* (improve), *government* (govern). The words *quickly*, *bright*, *slowly* and *green* are not nominalisations.

Q2. decision; improvement; arrival; kindness; activity; failure; performance; existence.

Q3. **-al:** arrival, refusal. **-tion / -sion:** reaction, erosion. **-ness:** kindness, weakness. **-ity:** activity. **-ure:** failure, mixture. **-ment:** agreement, improvement. **-ence:** existence.

Q4. Sample answers: (a) *the council decided to close the pool*; (b) *someone cleans the creek*; (c) *a working group formed*. Any clause that puts a doing verb back in is acceptable.

Q5. (a) arrival (b) failure (c) excitement (d) decision (e) improvement.

Q6. (a) Text A. It uses nominalisations (*flooding, formation, cleaning*), has no contractions, and sounds like an official document. (b) Any three of: *flooding, build-up, response, formation, cleaning, planning*. (c) Text B names a doer: “*they’ll clean the creek*”. Text A only says “*the cleaning of the creek*” — nobody is named. (d) Text B. Two features from: contractions (*they’ll*), everyday verbs (*wrecked, set up*), direct chatty phrasing (*it rained hard*).

Q7–Q10. Answers will vary. See the sample responses below for what a strong one looks like. For Q7, look for at least four nominalisations and a comment on formality. For Q8, look for three nouns turned back into verbs and a fair answer about what the formal style does well. For Q9, look for: same event reported; the doer disappears and the tone becomes more official; the principal picks the official version, the journalist picks the version that names the students. For Q10, look for one strong reason on each side and a reasoned position — either side can earn full marks.

Full sample responses

These responses are samples written for this book. They show one way to answer well, not the only way.

Q7 — sample rewrite and tone comment.

The concert opened with a **performance** of three songs by the Year 8 singers, followed by two songs from the band. **Thanks** went to the parents for their **help**. After one **failure** of the lights, the show went on.

Tone comment: the rewrite sounds more formal and official, because the events — not the people — now lead each sentence.

Q8 — sample friendly rewrite.

Hi everyone! The library will close early this Friday because new shelves are coming. Workers will fit them over the weekend, and the library will reopen on Monday morning. See you there!

What changed: *closure* → *close*, *arrival* → *coming*, *reopening* → *reopen* — the nouns are back to being verbs, so the message is easier to follow. What the circular keeps: its formal style makes the notice sound settled and official, like a promise the whole school can rely on.

Q10 — sample position.

Someone could agree: nominalisation packs ideas into few words and gives writing a calm, official sound, which suits reports and rules where readers want facts, not feelings. Someone could disagree: nominalisation can push people out of sentences and hide who did what, and too much of it leaves writing cold and hard to read — a message about the school fair works better with living verbs. My position is that the student is wrong to say “always”. Nominalisation is a tool: it fits formal reports and rules, but a text to friends or younger readers usually works better with verbs, because verbs keep people in the story.

Product task — sample analytic paragraph.

Text 1, the school circular, leans on nominalisation to sound official and calm. *Cancellation* packs the whole calling-off of the fair into one word, and *the forecast of heavy rain* gives the reason as a fact rather than an opinion. *The decision was made* does not say who decided — the doer has stepped out — which keeps attention on the choice itself instead of on people. By contrast, Text 2 uses living verbs: *they called off the fair*, *the school said no*. People stay in the sentences, and the tone is warm and chatty — *Bad news!* and *heaps* sound like a friend, not an office. Each text suits its audience: the circular suits the whole school community because it reads as settled and fair, while the message suits students because it shares feelings quickly. For its purpose, Text 1 is the more effective text: a school-wide change needs the calm, official tone that nominalisation builds.

Intertextual references in still images, moving images and sound

Chapter 2 · Language: expressing and developing ideas · Section 2C

Curriculum link. This section teaches VC2E8LA07: *explore how still images, moving images and sound use intertextual references to enhance and layer meaning*. It draws on the VCAA elaboration VC2E8LA07.E01 (identifying intertextual references in advertisements and discussing their impact on layering, for example the interrelationship of words and images or words and sound). The Level 8 achievement standard states the goal in student terms: *They explore how still images, moving images and sound use intertextual references to create meaning*. The skill returns in Section 3D, where allusion and quotation do the same job in literary texts, and it steps up at Level 9 as symbols in images and the use of sound augmenting meaning.

Theory

Part 1 · Texts that speak to other texts

An **advertisement** (an **ad**) is a text made to promote something — a product, a place, a club, an idea. Ads live in three forms: **still images** (print ads, posters, billboards), **moving images** (TV ads, online video ads, film trailers) and **sound** (radio ads, online audio ads, the soundtrack of a video ad). An ad that mixes words, images and sound is **multimodal** — it carries its meaning through more than one mode at once.

A word the curriculum uses but does not define. The Victorian Curriculum uses the term *intertextual reference* but does not define it. This section therefore treats it as: **a moment when one text, on purpose, carries something from another text — its words, its image, its sound or its style — so that the older text’s meaning joins the new one**. Every question in this section is answerable on that definition alone. The wider idea has a name too: **intertextuality**, the study-word for texts being built out of other texts. The word was given to literary studies in the 1960s by Julia Kristeva, a writer on literature. Other books may stretch or shrink these meanings; in this section, the meanings above are the ones in play.

One sentence to stand on before we start: still and moving images and sound can give an audience a point of view — that skill from Level 7 is assumed here only in the sense that this section re-teaches it as it goes. What is new at Level 8 is the question *what happens when that point of view is built out of another text?*

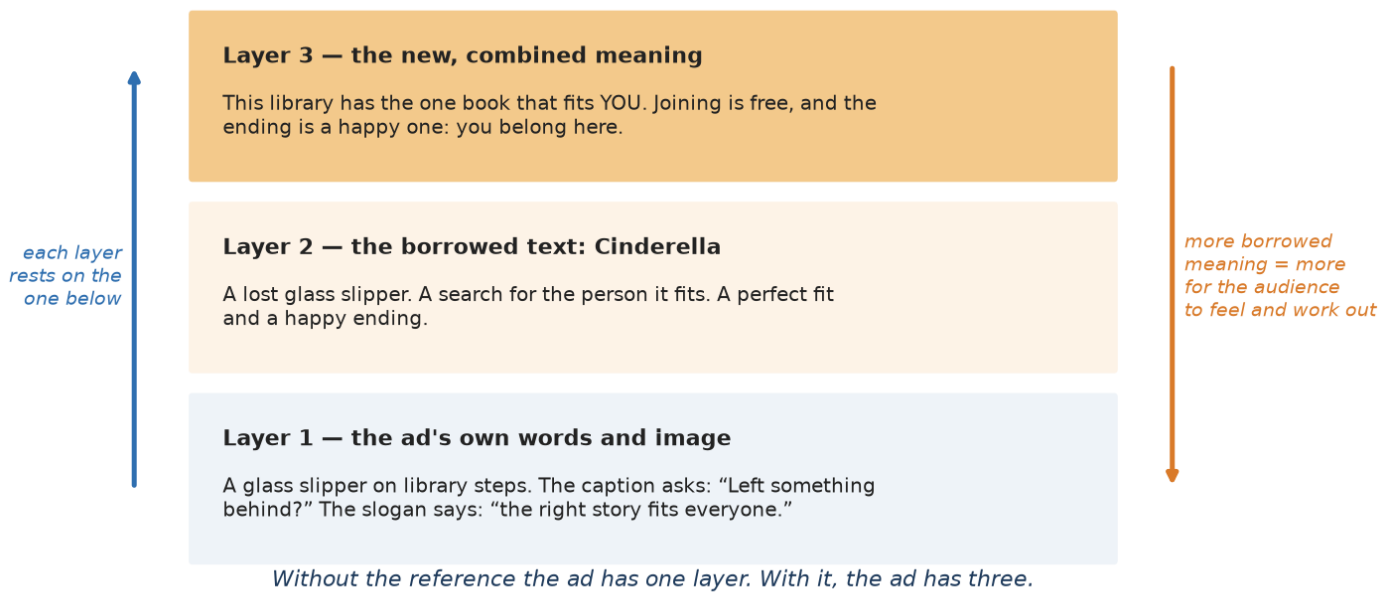
Part 2 · Why makers borrow: layered meaning

When an ad borrows from another text, the borrowed text does not arrive empty. It brings its story, its feelings and its ideas with it. The ad’s own meaning and the borrowed meaning then stack into **layers**. The curriculum’s word for what the reference does is *enhance*: the borrowed layer makes the ad’s meaning richer, quicker and deeper than the ad could build on its own.

- **Speed.** A whole tale can arrive in one image. One small shoe on a doorstep brings an entire fairy tale.
- **Feeling.** A borrowed song or rhythm brings its mood for free — warmth, drama, danger, fun.
- **The in-group wink.** An audience that catches the reference feels clever and chosen. Catching it is part of the pleasure.

One reference, three layers

The Hillside Library slipper ad, from the bottom up



A stack of three layers built from the Hillside Library slipper ad: the ad's own words and image, the borrowed Cinderella layer, and the new combined meaning

Part 3 · Three channels, one skill

The same borrowing happens in all three channels. The difference is what each channel can carry: a still image borrows famous pictures, poses and looks; a moving image can borrow whole scenes, shots and styles of film; sound borrows melodies, rhythms, voices, spoken lines and sound effects.

Three channels, one skill

Where advertisements borrow from other texts

Still images	Moving images	Sound
Forms it takes print ads, posters, billboards, magazine and online banners	Forms it takes TV ads, online video ads, film trailers, animated ads	Forms it takes radio ads, podcast ads, the soundtrack of a video ad, jingles
What it can borrow a famous painting or pose, a well-known photo layout, the colours or look of a fairy tale or film	What it can borrow a famous scene or shot, a character type, the style of a whole kind of film	What it can borrow a well-known melody or song, a famous voice or line, a sound effect with a story behind it
Sample (written for this book) a helmet poster that photographs a cracked eggshell like Humpty Dumpty's fall	Sample (written for this book) a bakery ad shot like a blockbuster trailer: "This term ... one loaf ... will change everything."	Sample (written for this book) a tryouts ad that opens with three short knocks and one long one — the rhythm people call fate

The skill is the same in every channel: find the borrowed text, name it, say what it brings.

Three columns for still images, moving images and sound, each with the forms it takes, what it can borrow, and a short original sample

Part 4 · Four kinds of reference

References come in four common shapes. This section defines them as follows; they are our working set here, not a law of nature, and real ads often mix them.

- A **quotation** uses another text's exact words.
- An **allusion** hints at another text without naming it, and trusts the audience to fill the gap.
- A **parody** copies the style of another text, or of a whole kind of text, to be playful or funny.
- An **echo** reuses an image, a pose, a rhythm or a sound that belongs to another text.

Four kinds of intertextual reference

The same skill, four shapes — all samples written for this book

1 · Quotation

The ad uses the exact words of another text, word for word.

*A savings ad that says:
"A penny saved is a penny gained."*

(an old saying, quoted word for word)

2 · Allusion

The ad hints at another text without naming it. The audience fills the gap.

*A running-shoe ad:
"Some rabbits just run faster."*

(hints at The Tortoise and the Hare)

3 · Parody

The ad copies the style of another text, or a whole kind of text, to be playful or funny.

*A school-bake-sale poster shot like a blockbuster trailer:
"This term ... one loaf ... will change everything."*

(copies trailer style, not one exact text)

4 · Echo

The ad reuses an image, a pose, a rhythm or a sound that belongs to another text.

A radio ad that opens with three short knocks and one long one.

(echoes the rhythm of Beethoven's Fifth)

Four cards — quotation, allusion, parody, echo — each with what it does and a short original sample

Allusion and quotation are the same two tools that Section 3D examines in poems, novels and plays. The skill is one; this section practises it where the curriculum places it first, in still images, moving images and sound.

Part 5 · Words and image working together: the slipper ad

Here is an original print ad, written and drawn for this book. It is a sample — no such library exists — and it carries exactly one intertextual reference.

A print ad with a borrowed story inside it

Read it once as an ad. Then ask which older story it is borrowing.



An original print ad: a glass slipper left on the steps outside a library door at night, under a lamp, with the caption “Left something behind?” and the slogan “Hillside Library — the right story fits everyone.”

Read it once the way an audience would. A slipper, steps, a door, a lamp at night. A caption that asks a question. A slogan about stories that fit. Now read it a second time and ask the Level 8 question: *which older text is inside this ad?* The glass slipper is not the ad’s own invention. It belongs to the Cinderella tale — the story of a lost shoe, a search, a perfect fit and a happy ending, recorded in print by Charles Perrault in 1697 and retold ever since.

The ad’s words and image are **interrelated**: neither carries the fairy tale alone. The caption on its own reads like a lost-property notice. The image on its own reads like a fairy-tale picture. Read together, the words borrow the image’s tale, and the slogan’s word *fits* comes to mean a shoe and a story at once.

Part 6 · Words and sound working together: the radio ad

Sound borrows too — and radio ads, which have no pictures at all, are built entirely on it. Here is an original radio script written for this book.

A radio ad with a borrowed sound inside it

RADIO AD — 30 SECONDS • TORNADOES BASKETBALL • sample written for this book

SFX	Three short knocks and one long one — slow and heavy, like at a big wooden door.
NARRATOR	(low, calm voice) “That sound? For two hundred years, people have called it fate knocking.”
SFX	The same knock pattern again — but now it is a basketball bouncing in an empty stadium.
NARRATOR	“This term, the Tornadoes are holding tryouts. You bring the drive. We will teach the game.”
SFX	Sneakers squeaking on a court. A crowd starting to cheer.
NARRATOR	“Tornadoes Basketball. Open tryouts — Thursday after school, Riverside Stadium.”
JINGLE	(two rising notes) “Tor-na-does!”

Nothing in this script names Beethoven. The narrator lets the rhythm do the borrowing, then tells you what it means.

A radio ad script for Tornadoes Basketball: it opens with three short knocks and one long one, a calm narrator says people have called that sound fate knocking for two hundred years, then the same knock returns as a bouncing basketball and the ad invites players to open tryouts

The opening knocks borrow the famous rhythm of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony — three short notes and one long one, first played in Vienna in 1808. Many listeners have described that rhythm as fate knocking at the door; the ad’s narrator says so out loud, so the borrowing cannot be missed. The script then hands the knock to a bouncing basketball: fate’s knock becomes your chance calling. Words and sound are interrelated here exactly as words and image were in the slipper ad — the narrator’s words tell you what the borrowed sound is for.

Three ways sound can borrow

What a soundtrack, radio ad or jingle can carry from another text

Kind of sound reference	What it does	Sample (written for this book)
A known melody or song	Borrows the feeling the song already carries — excitement, comfort, drama, cool.	A bakery's morning ad that opens with birdsong and a whistling kettle: the sound of a fresh day.
A known rhythm or pattern	Borrows a beat people's ears already recognise, without needing the whole song.	Three short knocks and one long one — the rhythm of Beethoven's Fifth, the one people call fate.
A known voice, line or effect	Borrows a famous said line, a style of voice, or a sound effect with a story behind it.	A trailer-voice narrator saying "In a world ..." — the sound of blockbuster trailers.

Sound works even when you cannot see anything: radio ads are built entirely on this skill.

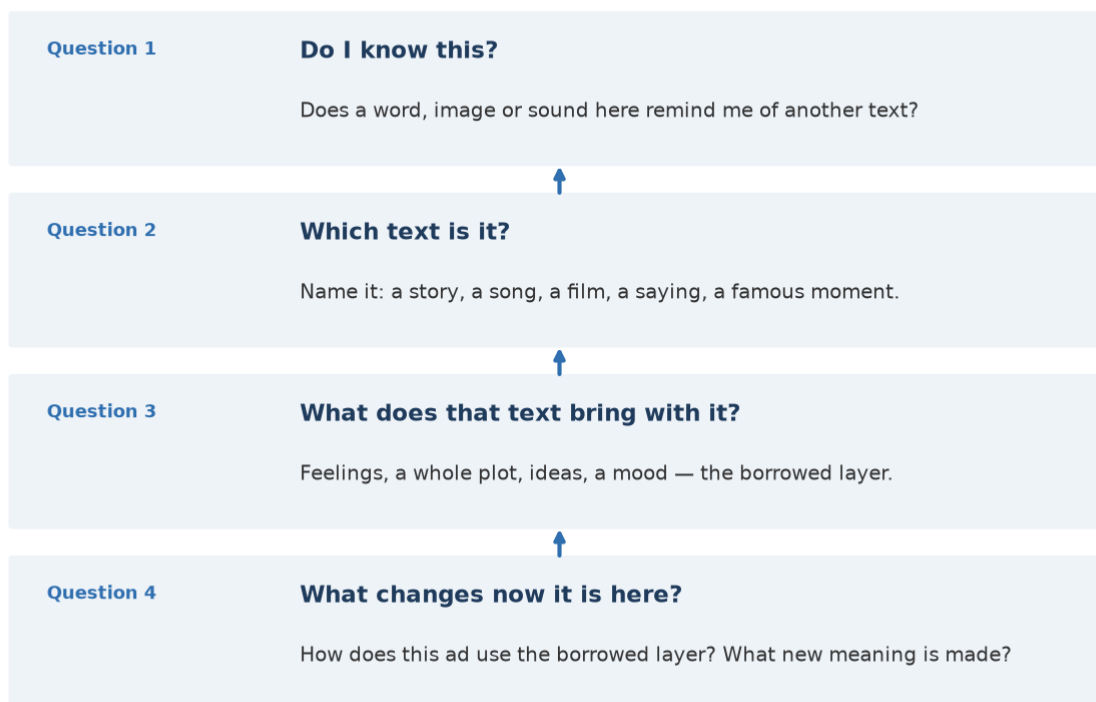
A table of three ways sound can borrow: a known melody or song, a known rhythm or pattern, and a known voice, line or effect, each with an original sample

Part 7 · Finding a reference: the spotter's four questions

References reward the audience that notices them. Four questions will find almost any of them, in any channel.

The spotter's four questions

Run them every time something in an ad feels familiar



Answer all four and you have found an intertextual reference — and you can say what it is doing.

A four-step flow: Do I know this? Which text is it? What does that text bring with it? What changes now it is here?

If question 1 gets a *yes* and question 2 can name the source, you have found an intertextual reference. Questions 3 and 4 turn the find into analysis.

Part 8 · Discussing the impact: the ladder and the audience

The curriculum asks for more than spotting: it asks you to discuss the reference's **impact on layering meaning** — what the borrowed text adds, and what the ad asks its audience to feel or do. This ladder is the discussion frame for the section.

The five-step ladder for discussing impact

Climb it for each intertextual reference you discuss.

Step 1 Name the reference and its source text.

"The ad borrows the glass slipper from the Cinderella tale..."

Step 2 Say what the ad shows and says on the surface.

A slipper on library steps; a caption about leaving things behind.

Step 3 Say what the source text brings with it.

A search, a perfect fit, a happy ending.

Step 4 Show how the modes work together.

The caption only becomes a fairy tale once the image is read with it.

Step 5 State the layered meaning and what it asks of the audience.

This library has the one story that fits you — so come in and join.

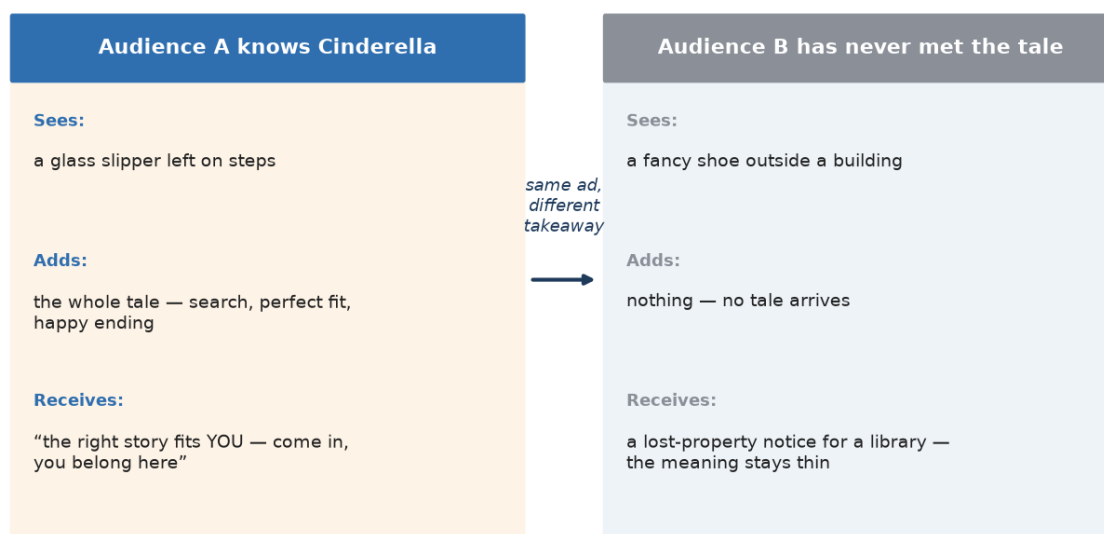
A response that stops at Step 1 has spotted. A response that reaches Step 5 has analysed.

The five-step impact ladder: name the reference and its source; say what the ad shows and says on the surface; say what the source brings; show how the modes work together; state the layered meaning and what it asks of the audience

One more idea matters for a full discussion, and it is where references can be argued about rather than just admired. A borrowed layer is only delivered to the audience that knows the source text.

The same ad, two audiences

What changes when the reference is missed?



A borrowed text only delivers its layer to the audience that knows it. Choosing a reference is choosing who the ad speaks to most strongly.

Two panels over the same slipper ad: an audience that knows Cinderella receives three layers; an audience that has never met the tale receives a thin lost-property notice

So choosing a reference is choosing who the ad speaks to most strongly. Is that a flaw or a feature? There are two strong positions and both deserve their best form. For the reference: it makes meaning rich, fast and rewarding, and it lets a small ad carry a big story; the audience that misses it still gets the surface layer. Against it: an ad usually wants to reach everybody, and half an audience receiving a thin message is half a message; plain words might do the job for all. A good discussion weighs both sides and reasons to a view — the mark is in the reasoning, not the side you land on.

Part 9 · Real ads that borrow

The skill is not just for samples. Two real, checkable examples:

- **“1984” (Apple, 1984).** First broadcast on 22 January 1984 during the Super Bowl XVIII broadcast in the United States, directed by Ridley Scott for the agency Chiat/Day, the ad introduced the Macintosh computer. It borrows its whole world from George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (published 1949): a grey, watched crowd facing a big controlling screen, broken up by one runner with a hammer. The closing text on the screen says the new computer will mean 1984 will not be like the novel’s 1984. The ad asks the novel to bring its dark feeling of control, so that the product can stand as the rescue.
- **The trailer for *The Social Network* (2010).** The film, directed by David Fincher, was promoted with a trailer set to a slow choral cover of Radiohead’s song “Creep” (first released in 1992), sung by the Belgian choir Scala & Kolacny Brothers. The borrowed song brings its mood of not belonging, and the cover slows and darkens it further — so a film about the founder of a social network is framed by a song about being left outside. Sound does the positioning before a single line of dialogue.

Both ads still exist and can be found in online archives; the facts above — dates, directors, agency, choir, song — are checkable against them.

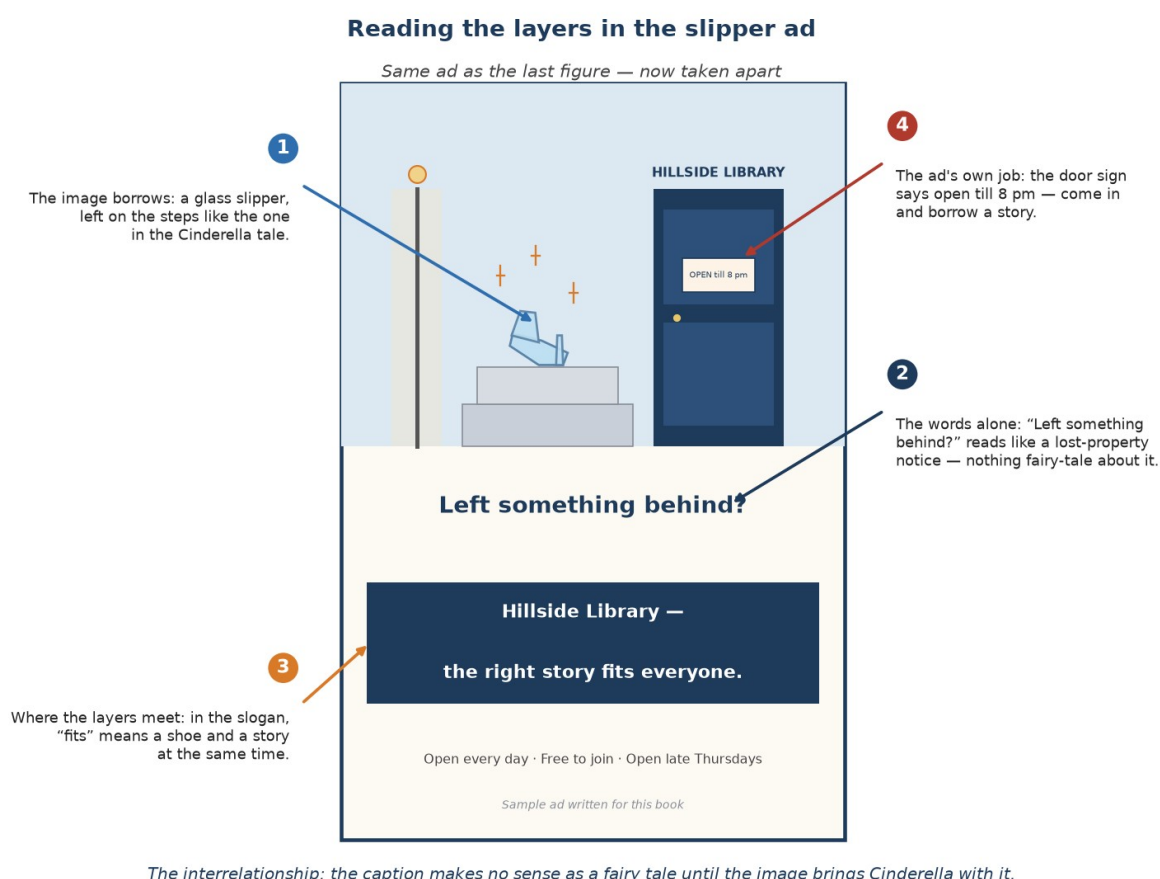
Worked examples

Example 1 · scaffolded

Take the slipper ad through the impact ladder.

Working	Comment
Step 1 — Name the reference and its source: the glass slipper from the Cinderella tale (Perrault, 1697).	Naming the source makes the reference discussable, not just felt.
Step 2 — Surface layer: a glass slipper on library steps at night; the caption “Left something behind?”; the slogan “the right story fits everyone.”	Without the tale, the caption reads like a lost-property notice.
Step 3 — Borrowed layer: a lost shoe, a search, a perfect fit, a happy ending.	One small shoe carries a whole plot and its feelings.
Step 4 — Modes working together: the image brings the tale; the caption turns it into a question aimed at <i>you</i> ; the slogan’s <i>fits</i> means a shoe and a story at once.	Words and image are interrelated: neither layer works alone.
Step 5 — Layered meaning and its ask: this library holds the one story that fits you; joining is free and the ending is happy — so come in.	The reference <i>enhances</i> the ad: a notice becomes an invitation.

The next figure marks those five moves onto the ad itself.



The slipper ad with four numbered callouts: the borrowed glass-slipper image, the ad’s own caption words, the slogan where the layers meet, and the door sign doing the ad’s practical job

Example 2 · unscaffolded

Here is a model discussion of the Tornadoes radio ad — the kind of paragraph the impact ladder builds. Study how each rung of the ladder appears in it.

The Tornadoes radio ad borrows the opening rhythm of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony — three short knocks and one long one, a pattern many listeners have called fate knocking for two hundred years. On the surface, the ad only announces open tryouts on a Thursday. But the borrowed rhythm arrives with its own layer: fate, a big moment, something that cannot be ignored. The ad then hands the knock to a bouncing basketball in an empty stadium, so fate knocking becomes your chance calling. The narrator names the sound’s meaning out loud, which means no listener misses the layer, and the crowd cheer at the end borrows the feeling of belonging to something big. The impact is that a plain notice about tryouts is enhanced into a story about a moment that arrives: the club is not just open — it is where your story starts.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Each ad below carries one intertextual reference. Use spotter questions 1 and 2: name the source text each ad borrows.

- (a) A bike-safety poster: a cracked eggshell shaped like a helmet. Words: “Humpty had no helmet. You do.”
- (b) A running-club ad: “Slow and steady joins the team. Tortoises welcome.”
- (c) A community-garden poster: “Rome wasn’t built in a day. Neither is a garden. Start digging.”
- (d) A library-card poster: “Once upon a time, there was a library card with your name on it.”

Q2. Name the kind of reference (quotation, allusion, parody or echo) in each.

- (a) A savings ad that quotes the saying “A penny saved is a penny gained.”
- (b) A running-shoe ad: “Some rabbits just run faster.”
- (c) A bake-sale poster shot like a blockbuster trailer: “This term ... one loaf ... will change everything.”
- (d) The Tornadoes radio ad’s opening knocks.

Q3. Imagine the slipper ad with its image removed, leaving only the caption, the slogan and the small print. What would the words mean without the picture, and which layer of meaning would be lost?

Q4. Match each sound to the ad it would serve best, and say what the sound borrows.

- (a) Birdsong and a whistling kettle.
- (b) Three short knocks and one long one.
- (c) Sneakers squeaking and a crowd starting to cheer.
- (d) A deep trailer voice saying “In a world ...”

Ads: (1) a bakery’s fresh-morning ad; (2) the Tornadoes tryouts ad; (3) a basketball game-day ad; (4) the trailer for the school musical.

Q5. Use the facts in Part 9 about Apple’s “1984” ad. Name the novel it borrows, say what feeling the novel brings, and say what the ad’s closing screen text asks the product to be.

Q6. Complete the three-layer table for the running-shoe allusion “Some rabbits just run faster.”

Layer	Your answer
Surface	A claim that the shoes make you fast.
Borrowed	?
Combined	?

(Hint: the ad borrows Aesop’s fable *The Tortoise and the Hare* — and then turns the fable’s lesson around.)

Un scaffolded

Q7. Write an analytic paragraph on the slipper ad, in the style of Example 2, using all five rungs of the impact ladder. Aim for six to eight sentences.

Q8. (Creating) Plan your own ad — print or radio — for one of: the school canteen, a local sports club, the school musical. It must carry exactly one intertextual reference. Complete this plan: product or cause; source text; kind of reference (quotation, allusion, parody or echo); the words; the image or sound; and the three layers (surface, borrowed, combined).

Q9. Use the missed-reference figure. Explain what Audience B receives from the slipper ad, why their takeaway is thinner, and give one reason a maker might still choose the Cinderella reference knowing some of the audience will miss it.

Q10. (Speaking and listening) In pairs, discuss: *an intertextual reference is a gift to the audience that catches it — but it leaves the rest of the audience outside.* Steelman both sides before you judge: give each position its strongest form, then reason to your own view. Your partner may reach a different view and still be right in their reasoning.

Product task — viewing

This is the section's viewing task. Watch one advertisement chosen by your teacher — or bring one in with permission — and prefer one that uses more than a single mode.

1. Watch once for the surface: what is promoted, and what is shown and said?
2. Watch again with the spotter's four questions. Find one intertextual reference.
3. Note: the source text; the layer it brings; and how words work with images or with sound to carry it.
4. Prepare a two-minute spoken analysis using the five-step impact ladder, and end by saying who the reference speaks to most strongly, and who it may leave outside.
5. Present to your group. Each listener asks one question; you answer it.

If no ad can be shown, use the two real ads named in Part 9 and describe what a viewer sees and hears.

Answers

Q1. (a) The Humpty Dumpty nursery rhyme. (b) Aesop's fable *The Tortoise and the Hare*. (c) The saying "Rome wasn't built in a day." (d) The fairy-tale opening "Once upon a time."

Q2. (a) Quotation — the saying's exact words. (b) Allusion — the fable is hinted at, never named. (c) Parody — the style of a blockbuster trailer is copied for fun. (d) Echo — a famous rhythm is reused without the whole piece.

Q3. Without the image, the caption reads like a lost-property notice and the slogan's *fits* means only "suits you". The borrowed layer — the search, the perfect fit, the happy ending — would be lost, leaving the ad with a single, thin layer.

Q4. (a)–(1): a fresh day, home, morning comfort. (b)–(2): fate knocking, a big moment arriving. (c)–(3): the big game, belonging to a crowd. (d)–(4): the drama of blockbuster trailers.

Q5. The novel is George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). It brings a dark feeling of being watched and controlled. The closing screen text asks the Macintosh to be the rescue — the reason 1984 will not be like the novel's world.

Q6. Borrowed: the fable's race, in which slow and steady beats the speedy rabbit. Combined: the joke flips the fable — with these shoes, even the rabbit wins — so the shoes are sold as pure speed, and the audience that knows the fable gets the joke as a bonus layer.

Q7. Answers will vary. A strong paragraph names the slipper and Perrault's tale, gives the surface layer, the borrowed layer, the words-with-image move, and ends with the layered meaning and its ask.

Q8. Answers will vary. Check: exactly one reference, a named source text, a kind, words, an image or sound, and three distinct layers.

Q9. Audience B sees a fancy shoe and reads a lost-property notice; no tale arrives, so the meaning stays thin. A maker may still choose the reference because the audience that catches it receives a rich, fast, rewarding message — and the surface layer still works for everyone else.

Q10. Answers will vary. Strong forms: *for*, rich and fast meaning plus a rewarding in-group feeling, with the surface layer still working for the rest; *against*, an ad wants to reach everybody, and a thin message for half the audience is half a message, so plain words may serve more people. Judge the reasoning, not the side.

Product task. Check: one reference found and named; the ladder's five steps all present; a stated view about who the reference includes and who it may leave outside; one listener question answered.

Fully-worked solutions

Q1. (a) The cracked eggshell helmet and the name *Humpty* borrow the nursery rhyme in which Humpty Dumpty falls and cannot be put together — so the poster's point is: some falls cannot be undone, wear the helmet. (b) *Slow and steady* and *tortoises* borrow the fable's race without naming it. (c) The poster quotes the saying about Rome and adds a garden twist. (d) *Once upon a time* quotes the traditional fairy-tale opening, so a library card becomes the beginning of your story.

Q2. (a) The saying is used word for word, so it is a quotation. (b) No text is named, but *rabbits* and *faster* let the audience fill the fable in: an allusion. (c) Nothing exact is copied; the trailer *style* — the pauses, the big claims — is imitated for fun: a parody. (d) The ad reuses the rhythm of Beethoven's Fifth without the melody or the name: an echo.

Q3. The words alone would ask a question about lost property and promise stories that suit you. The image is what imports Cinderella: the search, the perfect fit, the happy ending. Remove it and layer 2 disappears; the slogan's pun collapses to one meaning, and the ad's ask weakens from an invitation with a story to a plain claim.

Q4. (a)–(1): birdsong and a kettle carry the feeling of a fresh, comfortable morning — right for a bakery. (b)–(2): the knock rhythm carries fate knocking, a big moment — right for tryouts. (c)–(3): squeaks and a rising cheer carry the

big game and the crowd — right for game day. (d)–(4): the deep “In a world ...” voice carries blockbuster drama — right for selling a musical as an event.

Q5. Source text: Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, published 1949. Borrowed layer: a controlled, watched world and the fear of it. Surface: a grey crowd, a big screen, one runner who smashes it. Combined: the closing text says the Macintosh will keep 1984 from being like the novel’s 1984, so the product is positioned as rescue and freedom. The novel’s darkness is what gives the claim its weight.

Q6. Borrowed layer: in Aesop’s fable the hare is fast but overconfident, and the slow tortoise wins the race. Combined layer: the ad’s line admits the rabbit is faster *with these shoes* — it borrows the fable to flip it, so speed is the shoe’s promise and the fable-knowledge is the audience’s bonus joke. The reference enhances a plain speed claim into a joke that flatters the audience.

Q7. A model paragraph: *The Hillside Library ad borrows the glass slipper from the Cinderella tale recorded by Perrault in 1697. On the surface it shows a shoe left on library steps at night and asks, “Left something behind?” The borrowed layer arrives with the shoe: a search, a perfect fit, a happy ending. The modes work together — the caption only becomes a fairy-tale question once the image is read with it, and the slogan’s “fits” then means a shoe and a story at once. The layered meaning is that this library holds the one story that fits you, joining is free, and the ending is happy. The reference asks the audience to see borrowing a book as the start of their own tale — and it asks the ones who know the tale to feel that the library is speaking to them.*

Q8. A model plan: product or cause — the school canteen. Source text — the tale of King Midas, whose touch turned everything to gold. Kind — allusion. Words — “Everything you touch today turns to lunch.” Image — a hand reaching for a tray, with a gold glow around the food. Sound (if video) — a cash-register chime. Layers: surface, the canteen food looks like treasure; borrowed, Midas’s golden touch and its value; combined, the canteen’s food is worth gold today — come and spend your lunch money well.

Q9. Audience B sees only a fancy shoe outside a building. Because no tale arrives for them, the caption stays a lost-property question and the slogan stays a plain claim: one thin layer instead of three. A maker may still choose the reference because the audience that catches it receives the richest version of the message and feels chosen by it, while Audience B still receives a workable surface layer — the ad loses depth for them, not sense.

Q10. A model discussion. Strongest form *for the reference*: meaning arrives rich and fast, one image carrying a whole tale; catching it is rewarding and builds an in-group feeling between the ad and its audience; and the audience that misses it still receives the surface layer, so nothing is broken for them. Strongest form *against*: an ad is usually made to reach everybody who pays to see it, and a reference that half the audience misses delivers half a message to half the people; plain words may carry the ask to everyone, so borrowing can be a choice that favours some viewers over others. A reasoned view then weighs speed and reward against reach, and may conclude that the right choice depends on who the ad most needs to move.

Product task. A model two-minute analysis (of Apple’s “1984” ad, described from Part 9): *The ad borrows its whole world from Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four, published 1949. On the surface it shows a grey, watched crowd and one runner with a hammer. The novel brings its layer of control and fear of being watched. The modes work together: the still, grey crowd shots build the novel’s world, the moving runner breaks it, and the closing screen text names the point. The layered meaning is that the new computer stands for rescue and freedom. The reference speaks most strongly to viewers who know the novel; viewers who do not still see a rebel breaking a controlling screen — the surface layer survives.*

Everything in VC2E8LA07 is in this section: still images (the slipper ad, the posters), moving images (the Apple “1984” ad and the 2010 film trailer), sound (the Tornadoes radio ad and the soundtrack table), and the enhancement and layering of meaning that references create (the layers figure, the impact ladder). VC2E8LA07.E01 is delivered in full — identifying intertextual references in advertisements and discussing their impact on layering meaning, including the interrelationship of words and images (Parts 5, 8) and of words and sound (Parts 6, 8). The literary half of the skill — allusion and quotation in literary texts — is named here and taught in Section 3D.

The role and use of academic vocabulary

Curriculum focus: VC2E8LA08 — *examine the role and use of academic vocabulary* (draws on VC2E8LA08.E01 and VC2E8LA08.E02).

Theory

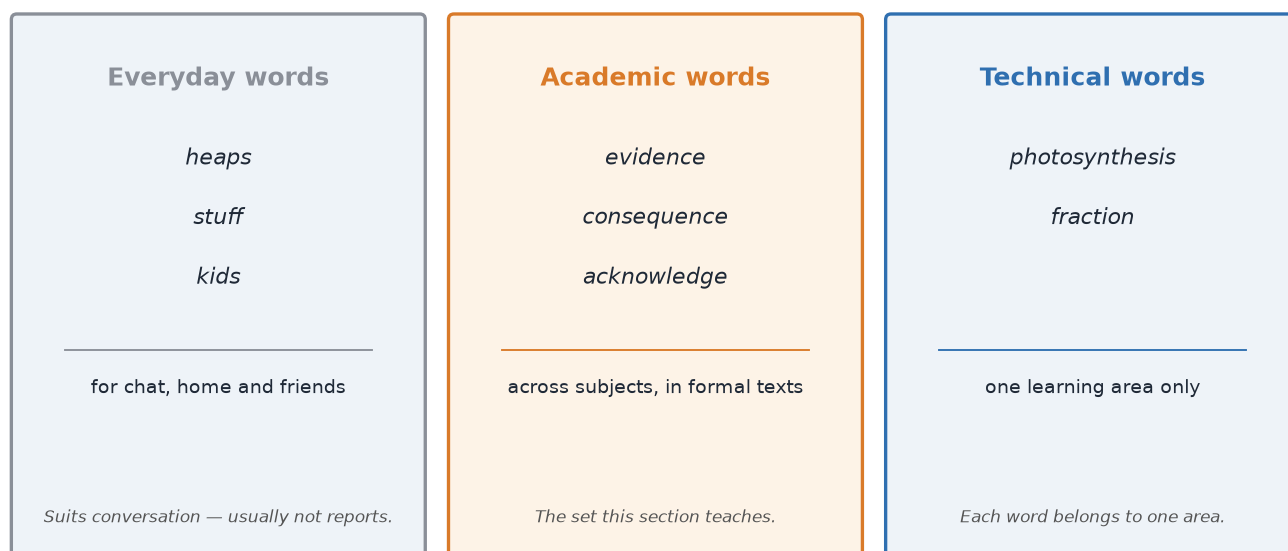
Write a report in Science, a discussion in Humanities, or a review in English, and the topics all change — but one set of words keeps appearing. Words like *evidence*, *consequence*, *contradiction* and *acknowledge* turn up in serious writing across every subject. That shared set of words is called **academic vocabulary**, and it is the subject of this section.

Defining the term. The Victorian Curriculum uses the term *academic vocabulary* but does not define it. This section therefore treats it as: **words that appear often in academic texts — structured, formal texts written for school and study — across many subjects, not just one.** Every task in this section is answerable on that definition alone. Other definitions of the term exist and are not interchangeable with this one. (Operational definition, this book, 2026.)

Three sets of words are worth separating (Figure 1):

- **Everyday words** — the casual words of home, friends and messages: *heaps*, *stuff*, *kids*. They suit chat and conversation. They usually do not suit reports.
- **Academic words** — words used across subjects in formal texts: *evidence*, *method*, *consequence*, *acknowledge*. This section is about them.
- **Technical words** — words that belong to one learning area: *photosynthesis* in Science, *fraction* in Mathematics. You have met these kinds of words before; academic words are the next set up, because they work in **every** subject, not only one.

Three sets of words



Academic words work in every subject. Technical words belong to one. Everyday words suit talk, not reports.

Three sets of words: everyday words, academic words and technical words, with example words and the job of each set

The role of academic vocabulary: four jobs

Why do reports and formal writing reach for these words? Because academic words do jobs that everyday words do not do well. Four jobs matter most (Figure 2):

1. **Naming what backs up a claim.** *Evidence, data* and *findings* point to the facts, numbers or results a claim stands on.
2. **Naming results.** *Consequence, result* and *effect* name what follows from something — and they signal that the writer is reasoning, not just listing.
3. **Flagging where ideas clash.** *Contradiction, however* and *although* warn the reader that two pieces of information do not agree, or that another side exists.
4. **Accepting other views.** *Acknowledge* and *recognise* show that the writer has given fair consideration to another view or another fact before making their point.

One word in this list needs defining. **Register** means the level of formality of language — how formal or casual the words are for a situation. Academic vocabulary belongs to a **formal register**: careful choices, no slang, no text-speak. Choosing the register is a choice, like choosing what to wear: the same message can be sent in a casual way or a formal way, and a school report calls for the formal one.

Four jobs of academic words in reports



Four jobs of academic words in reports: naming evidence, naming results, flagging clashes and accepting other views, each matched to example words

The words of academic report writing

Here is the vocabulary of report writing on one topic — **sustainability** — built around the four words the curriculum itself names as examples: *evidence, consequence, contradiction* and *acknowledge*. Each word belongs to a **word family** — the set of words built from one root, across the noun, verb and adjective forms (Figure 3). Knowing the family lets you pick the form a sentence needs: *The results contradict the claim* (verb) or *There is a contradiction in the data* (noun).

Root idea	Noun	Verb	Adjective / adverb
proof that backs a claim	evidence	—	evident
what follows from something	consequence	—	consequent; consequently

Root idea	Noun	Verb	Adjective / adverb
two things that do not agree	contradiction	contradict	contradictory
to accept or give credit to	acknowledgement	acknowledge	acknowledged

Word families: four academic roots

Root idea	Noun	Verb	Adjective / adverb
proof that backs a claim	evidence	—	evident
what follows from something	consequence	—	consequent, consequently
two things that do not agree	contradiction	contradict	contradictory
to accept or give credit to	acknowledgement	acknowledge	acknowledged

Knowing the family lets you pick the form a sentence needs: The results *contradict* the claim (verb) / There is a *contradiction* in the data (noun).

Word family table for evidence, consequence, contradiction and acknowledge, showing the noun, verb and adjective or adverb forms built from each root

A wider **word bank** for reports on sustainability (or any topic):

Job in the report	Words you can use
Naming evidence and data	evidence, data, findings, survey, audit, source
Naming results and effects	consequence, result, effect, impact, outcome
Flagging clashes and limits	contradiction, however, although, yet, limit
Accepting other views	acknowledge, recognise, accept, grant
Showing size or strength	significant, considerable, minor, slight
Reporting carefully	indicate, suggest, demonstrate, support
Wrapping up	conclusion, overall, in summary

Report verbs deserve a note. In a report, the evidence *indicates*, *suggests* or *demonstrates* something — those verbs say **how strongly** the information backs the claim. “The survey suggests...” is more careful than “The survey proves...”, because a survey points towards an answer without locking it in.

A model paragraph, labelled

Below is a model paragraph from a report on sustainability, written for this book. Read it once for sense, then look at how the academic words do the four jobs.

Sample paragraph (written for this book) The March 2026 waste audit at our school produced clear **evidence** that most lunchtime waste could be recycled. The **data** show that 62 of the 80 kilograms collected could have gone into recycling or compost bins. One **consequence** of this finding is that the school’s waste costs will keep rising unless habits change. A student survey **indicated** strong support for more recycling points, **although** it also revealed a **contradiction**: most students said they sort waste at home, yet the school bins showed little sign of sorting. The report **acknowledges** that bins were hard to find and labels

were unclear. The **conclusion** is that better bins and clearer signs are needed before students are blamed for the problem.

Figure 4 shows the same paragraph with each academic word tagged by its job.

A model report paragraph, tagged by job

Sample paragraph written for this book — topic: sustainability

The March 2026 waste audit at our school produced clear **evidence** that most lunchtime waste could be recycled. The **data** show that 62 of the 80 kilograms collected could have gone into recycling or compost bins. One **consequence** of this finding is that the school's waste costs will keep rising unless habits change. A student **survey indicated** strong support for more recycling points, **although** it also revealed a **contradiction**: most students said they sort waste at home, yet the school bins showed little sign of sorting. The report **acknowledges** that bins were hard to find and labels were unclear. The **conclusion** is that better bins and clearer signs are needed before students are blamed for the problem.

- naming evidence (evidence, data, survey)
- reporting carefully (indicated), wrapping up (conclusion)
- naming a result (consequence)
- flagging a clash (although, contradiction)
- accepting another view (acknowledges)

The model sustainability report paragraph with its academic words highlighted and tagged by job: evidence, consequence, contradiction and acknowledge

Comparing vocabulary choices: precise information and abstract ideas

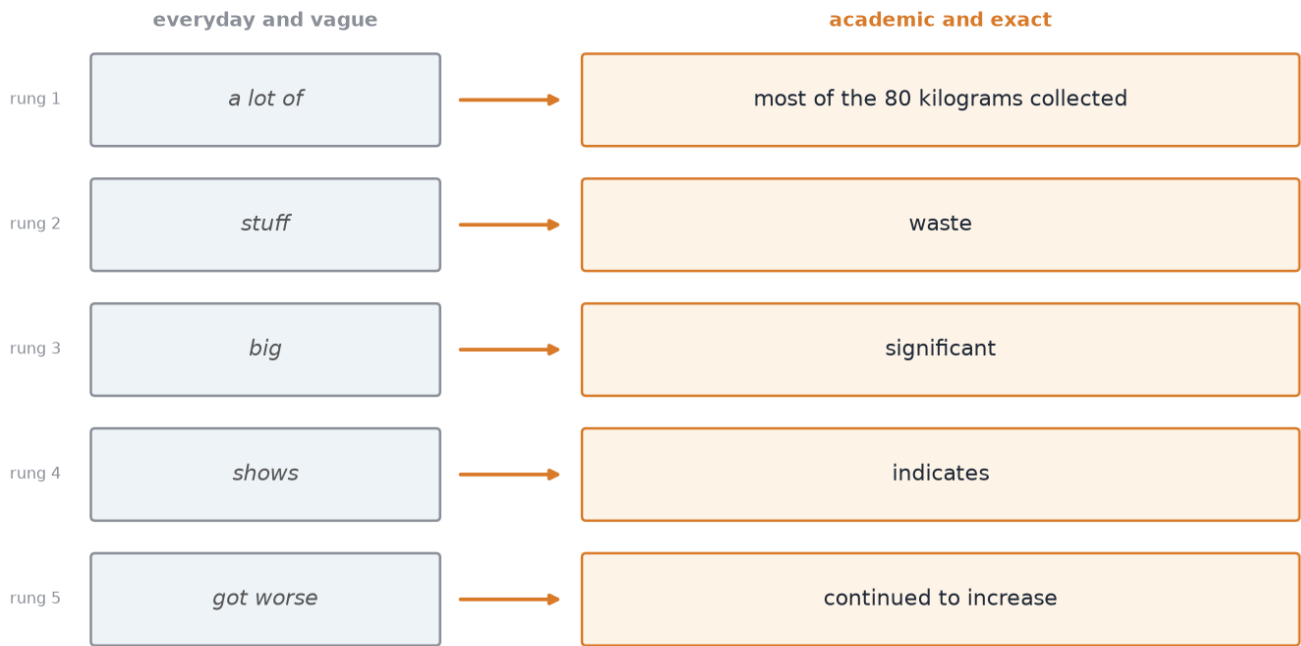
Writers choose academic words for two main effects (Figure 5 and Figure 6):

1. To communicate precise information. Precise means exact — saying exactly what you mean, so the reader has to guess nothing. Compare:

- *A lot of the rubbish was recyclable.* (How much is “a lot”? The reader guesses.)
- *Most of the 80 kilograms collected was recyclable.* (The amount is stated; nothing is left to guess.)

Everyday words like *stuff*, *a lot of* and *big* are vague. Academic writing swaps them for exact words and exact numbers.

Climbing towards precision



Exact words and exact numbers leave the reader nothing to guess.

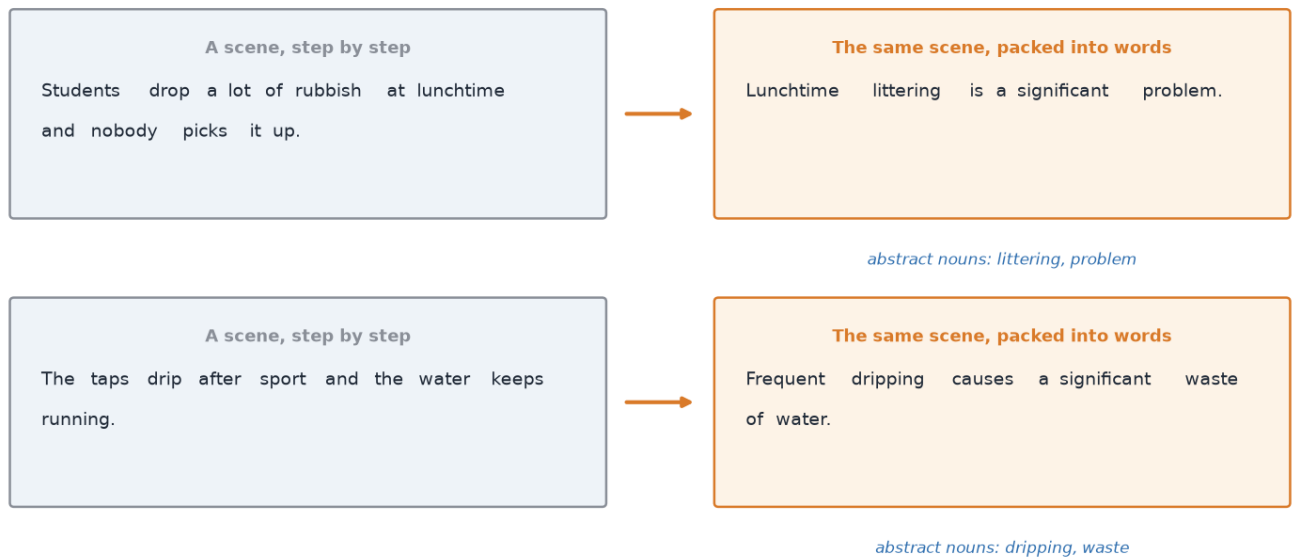
A ladder of vocabulary choices climbing from vague everyday words at the bottom to precise academic words at the top, with paired examples on each rung

2. To convey abstract ideas. An **abstract idea** is an idea you cannot see or touch — a quality, a process or a concept named by one word: *waste, efficiency, sustainability, contradiction*. Academic texts pack whole situations into such words. Compare:

- *Students drop a lot of rubbish at lunchtime and nobody picks it up.* (A scene, step by step.)
- *Lunchtime littering is a significant problem.* (The same situation, packed into abstract nouns: *littering, problem*.)

Turning an action or a quality into a noun is **nominalisation** — you examined it in Section 2B, where it condenses information and shifts tone. Nominalisation is one of the main tools academic vocabulary uses to convey abstract ideas.

Packing scenes into abstract ideas



Turning actions and qualities into nouns — nominalisation (Section 2B) — packs a whole situation into words a report can measure, compare and act on.

Two sentence pairs showing concrete, step-by-step wording rewritten as compact abstract wording, with the nominalised words flagged

Side by side: the same information, two ways of writing

Figure 7 shows the same findings written in an everyday register and in an academic register. Nothing in the facts has changed — only the word choices have.

Same finding, two registers

Passage A — everyday register

We looked into how much power our school uses. We found that the library lights stay on all night most nights. That wastes heaps of power, and it costs a lot.

Passage B — academic register

This investigation examined the school's energy use. The evidence indicates that the library lights remain on at night on most school nights. The consequence is a significant waste of energy and money.

what changed:	<i>looked into</i>	→	examined	a more precise verb
	<i>found</i>	→	the evidence indicates	backing in the words
	<i>stay on all night</i>	→	remain on at night	formal register
	<i>wastes heaps of power</i>	→	a waste of energy	an abstract noun

Two versions of the same finding about school energy use, one in everyday words and one in academic words, with the changed choices labelled

Read the two versions in Figure 7 and notice:

- Precise verbs: *looked into* became *examined*; *found* became *the evidence indicates*.
- Formal register: *stay on all night* became *remain on at night*; *heaps of power* became *a significant amount of energy*.
- Abstract ideas: *wastes heaps of power* became *a significant waste of energy* — the action *wastes* is now the noun *waste* (nominalisation again).

The academic version says the same thing in fewer guesses: every claim carries its backing, and every amount has a home.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — scaffolded

Task. In the model paragraph above, identify the four curriculum words — *evidence*, *consequence*, *contradiction*, *acknowledge* — and state the job each one does in the paragraph.

Word found in the paragraph	Job it does	Comment
evidence (“produced clear evidence”)	Naming what backs up a claim	It tells the reader the audit is the proof behind the report’s main claim.
consequence (“One consequence of this finding”)	Naming a result	It signals reasoning: from the finding, a result follows (rising costs).
contradiction (“it also revealed a contradiction”)	Flagging where ideas clash	It warns that what students said and what the bins showed do not agree.

Word found in the paragraph	Job it does	Comment
acknowledges (“The report acknowledges”)	Accepting another view	It gives fair credit to the other side — bins were hard to find — before drawing the conclusion.

Notice the shape of each answer: the **word**, then the **job**, then **what it does in this paragraph**. That three-part shape is a good habit for every vocabulary comment you write.

Worked example 2 — scaffolded

Task. Here is a finding about water, written in an everyday register. Upgrade its word choices to suit a formal school report, then explain what each change improves.

Everyday version: Our school uses a lot of water. The taps in the change rooms drip a fair bit after sport. Someone should fix them soon or it’ll keep getting worse.

Everyday choice	Academic choice	What improves
<i>a lot of water</i>	<i>a significant amount of water</i>	Precision: “a lot” is vague; “significant” is a measured judgement a report can back with numbers.
<i>drip a fair bit</i>	<i>drip frequently</i>	Precision: “a fair bit” is casual and unclear; “frequently” states how often.
<i>Someone should fix them</i>	<i>The taps should be repaired</i>	Register: the formal verb <i>repaired</i> replaces <i>fix</i> , and the sentence no longer leans on a vague “someone”.
<i>it’ll keep getting worse</i>	<i>The waste will continue to increase</i>	Abstract idea: the situation becomes a thing that can be measured — <i>waste</i> — and the contraction <i>it’ll</i> goes, because formal writing avoids contractions.

Upgraded version: The school uses a significant amount of water. The taps in the change rooms drip frequently after sport. If they are not repaired soon, the waste will continue to increase.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Sort these nine words into three groups: **everyday**, **academic** and **technical**. *heaps, evidence, habitat, stuff, consequence, fraction, acknowledge, kids, contradiction*. (Hint: technical words belong to one learning area; academic words work across subjects; everyday words suit chat.)

Q2. Complete the word family table. One form is given; add the others using the table in the Theory as a model.

Given	Add the noun	Add the verb	Add the adjective
contradict (verb)			
evidence (noun)			
consequence (noun)			
acknowledge (verb)			

Q3. Match each word to its job in a report. Draw a line or write the letter.

Word	Job
1. evidence	a. flags that two pieces of information do not agree
2. consequence	b. accepts or gives credit to another view or fact
3. contradiction	c. names what backs up a claim
4. acknowledge	d. names what follows from something

Q4. Choose the word that communicates more precise information. Write the full sentence with your choice.

- (a) The survey (*found out / indicated*) that most students walk to school.
- (b) After the new bins arrived, there was a (*big / significant*) drop in litter.
- (c) The report (*backs up / supports*) the idea that composting cuts waste.

Q5. Find and list the academic words in this sample passage (written for this book). Look for words that name evidence, results, clashes or other views.

The survey data provide strong evidence that the school garden saves water. However, one finding contradicts the rest: the garden used more water in autumn than in summer. The report acknowledges that the autumn plantings were new and needed extra watering.

Q6. Complete the sentences using words from the bank: **evidence, consequence, although, acknowledged.**

- (a) The audit provided clear _____ that energy use falls when lights are off.
- (b) One _____ of the leak was a higher water bill.
- (c) Most classes recycled paper, _____ not every classroom had a bin.
- (d) The report _____ that the survey was completed by only half the school.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Write one sentence that could open a report, using both *consequence* and *significant*. Your sentence must make a claim that evidence could test.

Q8. Rewrite this everyday passage in an academic register for a school report (keep the facts the same):

Kids keep leaving lights on in empty rooms. It wastes heaps of power and it costs the school a fair bit every year.

Q9. Explain why “*Heaps of kids drop stuff in the wrong bin*” is a poor fit for a formal report, then rewrite the sentence in an academic register. Your explanation should name at least two problems with the original words.

Q10. A survey found that 70 per cent of students said they recycle at home. A bin check at school found that only 15 per cent of bins were sorted correctly. Write two sentences: the first names the **contradiction** between the two findings, and the second **acknowledges** one possible reason for it.

Product task — an analytic response

Task. Below are two sample passages on the same finding, both written for this book. Passage A uses an everyday register; Passage B uses an academic register.

Passage A (everyday register) We looked into how much power our school uses. We found that the library lights stay on all night most nights. That wastes heaps of power, and it costs a lot.

Passage B (academic register) This investigation examined the school's energy use. The evidence indicates that the library lights remain on at night on most school nights. The consequence is a significant waste of energy and money.

Write an analytic response of one or two paragraphs comparing the two passages. Your response must:

- identify **two** words or phrases in Passage B that communicate **precise** information, and explain what each one makes exact;
- identify **one** abstract idea in Passage B and name the word that carries it;
- state which passage is better suited to a formal school report, and give **two** reasons tied to the word choices (not to your personal taste).

Before you choose your words, run the checklist in Figure 8.

Checklist before you choose a word

☒	Purpose	What is this text for — a report, an argument, a review?
☒	Audience	Who will read it — a teacher, the school, the public?
☒	Precision	Does the word say exactly what I mean?
☒	Abstract ideas	Is there one word that carries the whole idea?
☒	Register	Is the word formal enough for this task?

If a word answers yes to all five, it is ready for the report.

A checklist for choosing academic vocabulary: purpose, audience, precision, abstract ideas and register, each with a guiding question

Success criteria. Your response: (1) quotes the exact words it discusses; (2) uses the metalanguage of this section — *precise, abstract idea, register, academic vocabulary*; (3) gives reasons tied to the text, not to taste; (4) uses a formal register of its own.

Answers

Q1. Everyday: *heaps, stuff, kids*. Academic: *evidence, consequence, acknowledge, contradiction*. Technical: *habitat* (Science), *fraction* (Mathematics).

Q2. contradict → noun *contradiction*, adjective *contradictory*; evidence → adjective *evident* (no common verb form); consequence → adjective *consequent* (or *consequential*), adverb *consequently*; acknowledge → noun *acknowledgement*, adjective *acknowledged*.

Q3. 1 → c (evidence names what backs up a claim); 2 → d (consequence names what follows); 3 → a (contradiction flags that two pieces of information do not agree); 4 → b (acknowledge accepts another view or fact).

Q4. (a) The survey *indicated* that most students walk to school. (b) After the new bins arrived, there was a *significant* drop in litter. (c) The report *supports* the idea that composting cuts waste. In each pair, the second word is the report verb: it states the finding in a measured, formal way.

Q5. *data, evidence, contradicts, acknowledges, finding, report, survey*. (However also counts — it flags the clash.) Words like *garden, water, autumn* and *plantings* are topic words, not academic words: they belong to this one text, not to reports in general.

Q6. (a) evidence; (b) consequence; (c) although; (d) acknowledged.

Q7. Model: *One significant consequence of the school's food waste is the rising cost of bin collection*. The claim is testable: waste records and bills could support or refute it. (Any sentence that uses both words and makes a testable claim earns the mark.)

Q8. Model: *Students frequently leave lights on in empty rooms. This results in a significant waste of energy and a considerable cost to the school each year*. Key changes: *kids* → *students*; *keep leaving* → *frequently leave*; *wastes heaps of power* → *a significant waste of energy*; *a fair bit* → *a considerable cost*; contraction removed.

Q9. Two problems to name (any two): (i) *heaps of* and *stuff* are vague — neither tells the reader how many or what kind; (ii) *kids* and *stuff* are casual, everyday words below the register a report needs. Model rewrite: *A large number of students place waste in the wrong bin*. Better still, with evidence: *The audit found that most students place recyclable waste in the wrong bin*.

Q10. Model: *The survey and the bin check contradict each other: most students said they recycle at home, yet the bins at school showed little sorting. The report acknowledges that sorting at home may be easier, because home bins are labelled and school bins are not*. The first sentence names the clash; the second accepts a possible reason and does not blame students.

Product task — model response.

Passage B communicates its finding more precisely than Passage A. Where Passage A says the writers *looked into* power use, Passage B says the *investigation examined the school's energy use* — the words name exactly what was done and what was looked at. Passage B is also precise about time: *on most school nights* sets a clear, checkable limit, while *all night most nights* is loose and doubled up. Two phrases carry this precision: *the evidence indicates* and *on most school nights*.

Passage B also conveys an abstract idea: the whole situation is packed into the noun phrase *a significant waste of energy and money*. The action of wasting becomes the thing *waste*, which the report can measure and act on. Passage B is better suited to a formal school report for two reasons tied to its word choices: its register is formal throughout (no *heaps*, no *a lot*), and every claim carries its backing in the same sentence (*the evidence indicates*). Passage A suits a conversation about the finding; Passage B suits the report itself.

Cross-references: Section 2B (nominalisation and its effects), Section 4C (spelling technical and academic words), Section 5D (creating texts that advance opinions). Sample passages, paragraphs and responses in this section are original texts written for this book.

Punctuation conventions to extend ideas: semicolons and dashes

Chapter 2 · Language: expressing and developing ideas

Strand · Sub-strand

Language · Language for expressing and developing ideas

Content description

VC2E8LA09 — Students learn to: *understand and use punctuation conventions, including semicolons and dashes, to extend ideas and support meaning* (Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0, English, Level 8, VCAA).

Elaboration links

.E01 creating dialogue in a drama or play, showing interruptions, asides and pauses for effect. This is VCAA’s advisory example only; the content description above is what this section teaches.

Modes

Reading and Viewing — examining how semicolons and dashes shape meaning in texts · Writing — using semicolons and dashes to extend ideas in your own writing · Speaking and Listening — playing interruptions, asides and pauses when reading a scene aloud.

A sentence can do more than hold one fact. It can reach out and pull in a second idea — a reason, a contrast, a detail, a sudden turn. This section teaches the two marks that extend ideas like that: the **semicolon** and the **dash**. They work in opposite directions. The semicolon is calm and measured: it joins two full clauses and holds them in one breath. The dash is quick and dramatic: it breaks into a sentence to add, to interrupt or to spotlight.

In Level 7 you met two marks that add information: the colon, which points forward, and brackets, which tuck a quiet bonus into a sentence. Keep both in mind — this section’s marks join the same family, and the chooser chart at the end of the theory (Figure 7) sets the whole family out together.

Theory

Words you need. A *clause* is a group of words built around a verb; an *independent clause* is a clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence. You have met both ideas before, and they matter here, because both marks in this section work on independent clauses. An *aside* is a remark dropped into the middle of what someone is saying or writing — in a play, a remark aimed at the audience rather than at the other characters. An *interruption* happens when a speaker is cut off before finishing. A *pause* is a moment of silence — or of hesitation — inside speech.

Defining the term. The Victorian Curriculum speaks of *punctuation conventions* but does not define the word *convention*. This section therefore treats a **convention** as *an agreed rule that writers of printed English follow — a habit of the language, not a law of nature*. Punctuation conventions are settled by custom and by style guides, and where publishers differ this section says so. Every task in this section is answerable on that definition alone.

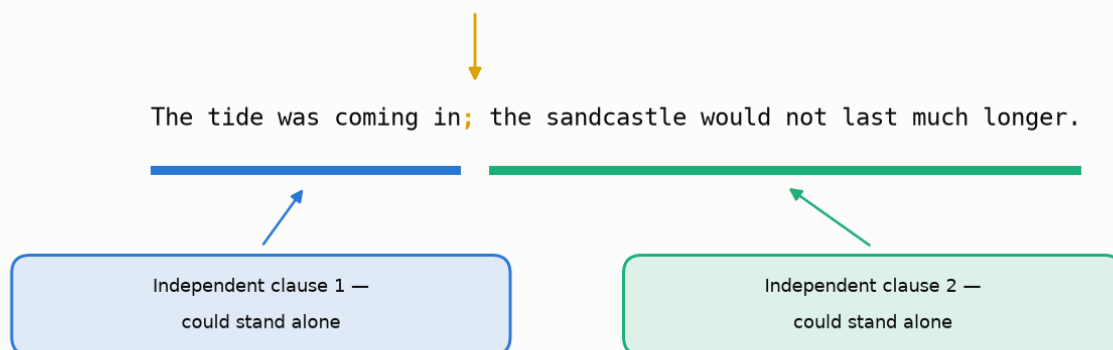
The semicolon

The **semicolon** is the mark ; — a full stop balanced on top of a comma. The shape is a clue to the job: stronger than a comma, softer than a full stop. Its main convention is this: **a semicolon joins two independent clauses whose ideas belong together**. Neither side needs a joining word like *and* or *but*; each side could stand alone, and the semicolon chooses to hold them together.

The tide was coming in; the sandcastle would not last much longer.

The semicolon: two independent clauses, one link

the semicolon holds the two ideas together



Each side is a complete clause. The semicolon joins them and keeps both ideas in one breath.

Labelled diagram of a semicolon sentence showing the two independent clauses either side of the mark and the link the mark makes between them

Both halves of that sentence are complete clauses. The semicolon holds them together so the reader feels the link between them — the rising water and the castle that cannot last — in a single move.

The semicolon has four jobs (Figure 2). In every one of them, both sides of the mark must be complete clauses.

Four jobs of the semicolon

Job	Example
1. Add a related idea	She loves the library; the fiction shelf is her favourite spot.
2. Show a contrast	The first half was slow; the second half raced.
3. Explain, or give a result	We missed the bus; we had to walk the whole way.
4. Separate items in a tricky list	On the menu were pies, still hot; sausage rolls, nearly gone; and apple fritters.

In every job, both sides of the mark are complete clauses.

Table of the four jobs of a semicolon — adding a related idea, showing contrast, explaining or giving a result, and separating items in a tricky list — each with an example sentence

Two grammar notes. First, after a semicolon the next word starts with a lower-case letter, unless it is a proper noun. Second, watch for the **comma splice** — the mistake of carrying two complete clauses on a comma alone. A comma is not strong enough for that job. Repair a splice with a semicolon, or split the clauses into two sentences (Figure 3).

The comma splice — and two ways to repair it

X

The robot worked perfectly, it only ran into the wall twice.

Broken: one comma is not strong enough to carry two complete clauses.



Fix 1 — use a semicolon

✓

The robot worked perfectly; it only ran into the wall twice.

or

Fix 2 — split into two sentences

✓

The robot worked perfectly. It only ran into the wall twice.

The join needs a stronger mark, or a fresh start — never a comma on its own.

Diagram of a comma splice marked as broken, with two repairs: a semicolon version and a full stop version

The effect. A semicolon slows the reader just enough to hold two ideas in one breath. It makes writing sound measured and confident — the voice of someone who can see how their ideas fit together. That is why semicolons turn up so often in formal and academic writing.

The dash

The **dash** is the long mark —. It is often called the *em dash*, because it is about the width of the letter m. Where the semicolon is calm and balanced, the dash is quick and dramatic. It has three jobs (Figure 4).

Three jobs of the dash

Job	How many dashes	Example
1. Spotlight an aside	a pair — like this —	The trophy — the one everyone thought was lost — turned up in the storeroom.
2. Land a dramatic ending	a single dash	The show ended with one last song — and the whole hall stood.
3. Cut off a speaker	a single dash	PRIYA: If we rush it we'll ruin —

Dashes are quick and loud where brackets are quiet.

Table of the three jobs of a dash — spotlighting an aside with a pair of dashes, landing a dramatic ending with a single dash, and cutting off speech with a single dash — each with an example

Dash or brackets? A dash pair and a pair of brackets can hold the same aside. The difference is volume. Brackets whisper: the detail is a bonus the reader could skip. Dashes announce: the reader must stop and meet the detail. The same sentence both ways:

The wildlife carer (she had raised three orphaned wombats) opened the gate. — brackets whisper the detail.

The wildlife carer — she had raised three orphaned wombats — opened the gate. — dashes spotlight it.

The same aside, two volumes

QUIET

The wildlife carer (she had raised three orphaned wombats) opened the gate.

Brackets whisper — a bonus you can skip.

LOUD

The wildlife carer — she had raised three orphaned wombats — opened the gate.

Dashes spotlight — the reader must stop and meet it.

The same sentence written twice — once with brackets around the aside and once with a dash pair — with a note that brackets whisper while dashes spotlight

Choose the mark that matches how loudly you want the aside heard.

One small convention. Some books print a space either side of a dash, and some print the dash closed up. Both choices appear in real books; the rule is to pick one and keep to it. This book prints dashes closed up, with no spaces.

The marks at work in a play

This section's elaboration sets the dash to work in dialogue, and for good reason. A **script** is a text written to be performed: the **dialogue** is what the characters say, and the **stage directions** — usually in brackets — describe the action and are not spoken aloud. In a script, punctuation becomes instructions for speaking.

- **Interruption.** A dash at the end of a line shows that a speaker is cut off before finishing. The next line belongs to whoever broke in.
- **Aside.** A pair of dashes lets a character slip a comment into the middle of a line — a wink to the audience.
- **Pause and change.** A dash in the middle of a line shows a speaker stopping, hesitating, then changing direction.

One more idea is worth knowing: three marks can hold a pause in speech, and each one tells the actor something different (Figure 6). The **ellipsis** — the three-dot mark ... — shows a voice trailing away into silence. A dash shows a voice stopping and turning. A comma gives only a small breath.

Three ways to hold a pause in speech

Mark	What the voice does	Example
dash —	stops, then turns	I was going to say — actually, forget it.
ellipsis ...	trails away into silence	I thought the answer was ...
comma ,	takes one small breath	Well, that changes things.

Three marks, three kinds of silence. Each one tells the actor something different.

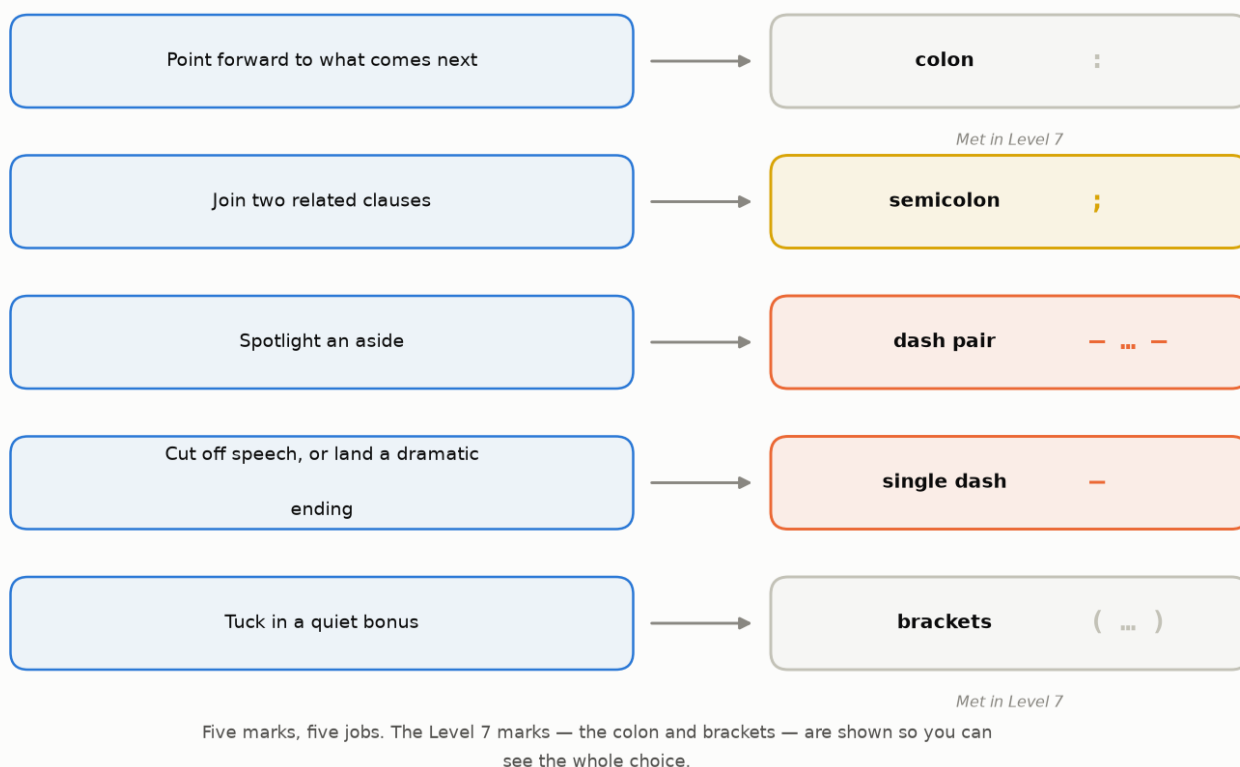
Table of three ways to hold a pause in speech — a dash, an ellipsis and a comma — with what the voice does and an example of each

And the semicolon in a play? It is rare, because people rarely speak in balanced clauses. When a character does speak in semicolons, it is a character choice: they sound prepared, formal, in control. Worked example 1 has a character who does exactly this.

Choosing the right mark

Five marks, five jobs (Figure 7). The colon and brackets are the Level 7 members of the family, shown here so you can see the whole choice at a glance.

Choosing the right mark



Decision chart matching five jobs — pointing forward, joining related clauses, spotlighting an aside, cutting off speech or landing a dramatic ending, and tucking in a quiet bonus — to the right mark for each job

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — reading a dramatic scene (scaffolded)

Here is an original scene, written for this book. Two students are building a model of the solar system for the school science fair. Read it once for the story, and once for the marks.

THE SCIENCE FAIR — Scene 4

A classroom after school. JORDAN and PRIYA stand over a table covered in cardboard and paint, building a model of the solar system for the school science fair.

JORDAN: The rings go on Saturn first — no, wait. The paint's still wet.

PRIYA: If we rush it we'll ruin —

JORDAN: I'm not rushing. I'm asking for a plan.

PRIYA: Sure we have a plan — a brilliant one, no doubt — so let's hear it.

JORDAN: Step one, we let the rings dry; step two, we add the moons; step three, we actually finish for once.

PRIYA: And if the judge asks about the scale —

JORDAN: We change the subject. Quickly.

(Sample text — written for this book.)

THE SCIENCE FAIR — Scene 4 (sample text, written for this book)

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PRIYA: And if the judge asks about the scale —

JORDAN: We change the subject. Quickly.

■ pause and change ■ interruption ■ aside ■ semicolon

The sample scene with its punctuation colour-coded: change of direction in blue, interruptions in orange, the aside pair in green and the semicolons in gold, with a key

Now find every dash and the semicolons, and name the job each one does:

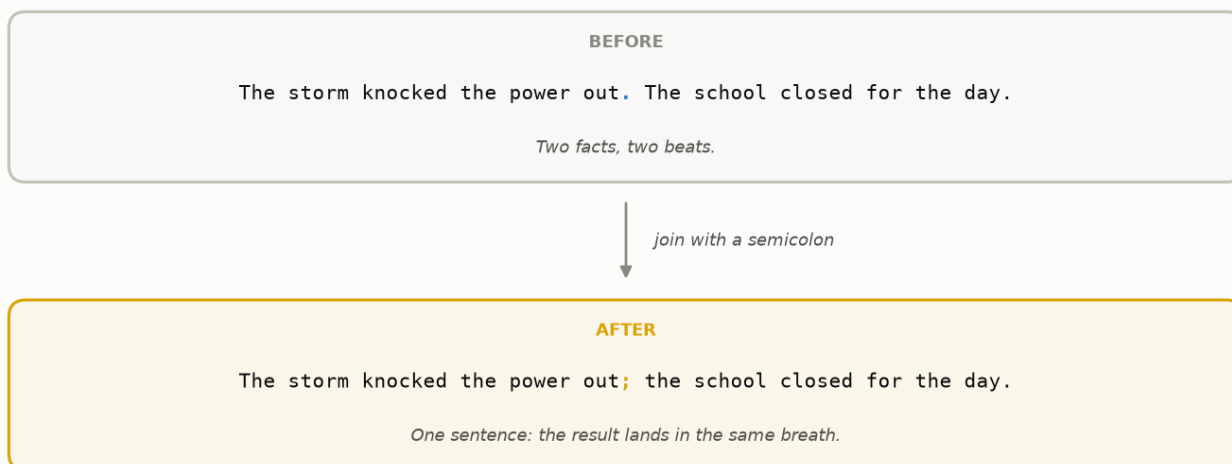
What I see	The job it does
“first — no, wait.”	Pause and change. JORDAN stops mid-thought and turns. We hear the thought happen.
“we’ll ruin —”	Interruption. PRIYA is cut off before she finishes, and JORDAN’s next line talks over her.
“— a brilliant one, no doubt —”	Aside. The dash pair spotlights PRIYA’s comment. She does not really think the plan is brilliant; the remark is aimed at us.
“dry; ... moons;”	Semicolons separating list items that already carry commas. The steps arrive as one tidy list — which is funny, because nothing about this pair is tidy.
“about the scale —”	Interruption again. PRIYA cannot even finish her worry before JORDAN cuts in.

Five marks, and not one of them is decoration. The dashes give the scene hurry, tension and sarcasm; the semicolons give us JORDAN trying to sound in control. The punctuation is doing the acting.

Worked example 2 — the effect of a semicolon (scaffolded)

Below is a before-and-after pair. Explain the effect of joining the two flat sentences with a semicolon.

Before and after: joining with a semicolon



Before and after comparison of two flat sentences about a storm and a school, joined into one sentence by a semicolon, with a note on the effect

Model explanation. The full stop keeps the facts apart: two events, two sentences. The semicolon ties them into one move, so the second clause arrives as the result of the first. The reader feels the cause and its effect in a single breath, without a joining word like *so*. One sentence, measured and steady, instead of two short stabs.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Name the mark in each sentence (semicolon, dash pair, or single dash) and its job.

- a) The bus was late; the teacher waited anyway.
- b) My brother — the one who can't cook — won the pancake contest.
- c) I was going to say — actually, forget it.
- d) On the tuckshop menu were pies, still hot; sausage rolls, nearly gone; and apple fritters, which sold out first.

Q2. Join each pair of sentences into one sentence using a semicolon.

- a) The rehearsal ran long. Nobody complained.
- b) We packed early. The bus was due at seven.
- c) The score was tied at full time. Extra time would decide the match.

Q3. Rewrite each sentence, replacing the brackets with a dash pair. Then say what changes.

- a) The old hall (built in 1912) will be repainted this year.
- b) Our captain (the tallest player on the court) dived for the loose ball.

Q4. Read: *The letter arrived on Tuesday — the same day we had given up hope.* What does the dash add that a full stop would not?

Q5. Read the sample scene in Worked example 1 again. (a) Identify each dash and name its job. (b) What do the semicolons in JORDAN's step line tell us about how he is speaking?

Q6. Each sentence below is a comma splice. Repair each one two ways — with a semicolon, and with a full stop — and say which version you prefer and why.

- a) The robot worked perfectly, it only ran into the wall twice.
- b) We missed the bus, we had to walk the whole way.
- c) The cake looked wonderful, everyone took a slice.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Writing. Write three sentences of your own about an event at your school: one uses a semicolon to join two related clauses, one uses a dash pair to spotlight an aside, and one uses a single dash to land a dramatic ending.

Q8. Editing. Here is a flat paragraph (sample, written for this book). Add at least one semicolon and at least one dash where they extend an idea, and explain one of your choices.

The excursion went ahead despite the rain. We visited the museum. The guide showed us a real fossil. It was heavier than it looked. The bus broke down on the way home. We sang all the way back.

Q9. Speaking and listening. With a partner, perform the sample scene twice: once playing every dash (cutting in, pausing, throwing the aside), and once ignoring them. Which version tells you more about Jordan and Priya? Give one reason.

Q10. Explain the difference in effect between brackets and a dash pair. Use the words *whisper* and *spotlight* in your answer.

Q11. Choose the mark. For each sentence, decide which mark fits the gap — a semicolon, a dash pair, or a single dash — and justify your choice with the matching convention.

- a) The team played its best game ___ the score stayed tight until the last minute.
 - b) The trophy ___ the one everyone thought was lost ___ turned up in the storeroom.
 - c) LEI: The person who left the gate open is — SAM: It was me. I'm sorry.
 - d) The show ended with one last song ___ and the whole hall stood.
-

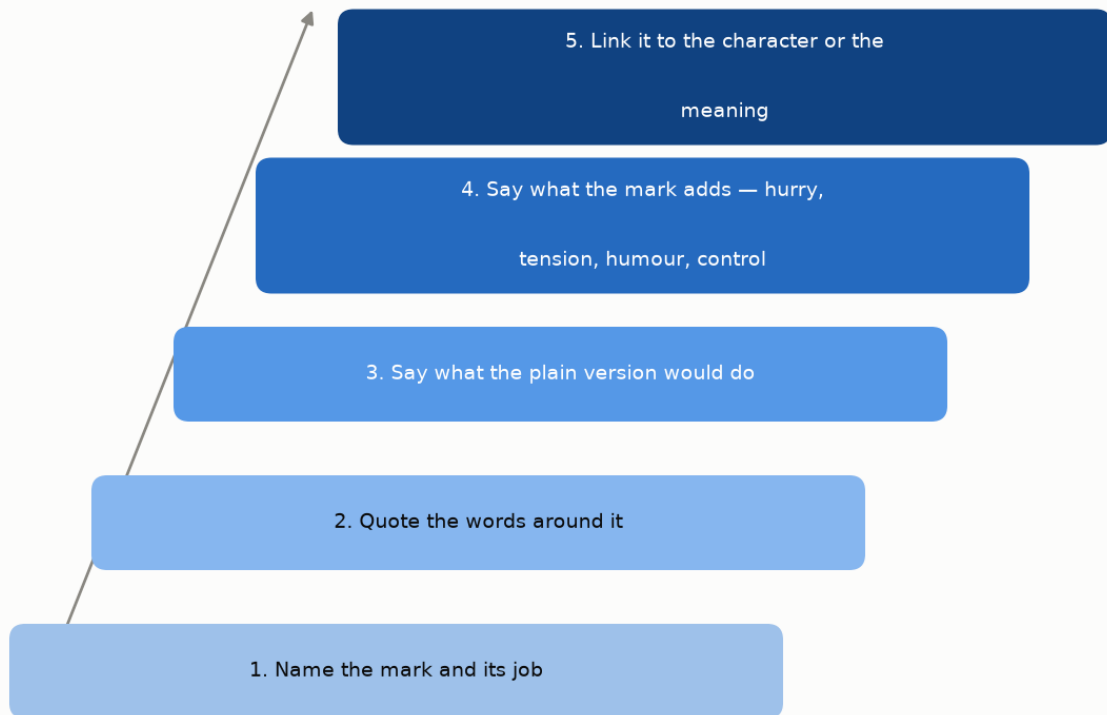
Product task — an analytic response

Task. Read the sample scene from Worked example 1 again. Write an analytic response of one or two paragraphs answering this question: **how do the punctuation choices shape meaning in the scene?** Your response must:

- cover at least **three** marks — at least one interruption, the aside, and JORDAN's semicolons;
- for each mark, quote the words around it and name its convention;
- for each mark, say what the plain version would do, and what the mark adds — hurry, tension, humour, control;
- finish with one sentence about what the marks tell us about Jordan and Priya.

Work up the ladder in Figure 10 for each mark you discuss.

Work up the ladder for each mark you discuss



Five-step ladder for analysing a punctuation choice: name the mark and its job, quote the words around it, say what the plain version would do, say what the mark adds, and link it to character or meaning

Success criteria. Your response: (1) quotes the exact words around each mark; (2) uses the metalanguage of this section — *semicolon, dash, interruption, aside, convention*; (3) says what each mark adds, not just where it sits; (4) links the marks to the characters and the moment.

Where to next: Section 3F asks you to write a two-character script — the place to put these dialogue marks to work. Section 5E will ask you to review and edit punctuation for effect.

Answers

Q1. a) Semicolon — joins two related clauses; the second contrasts with the first. b) Dash pair — spotlights an aside. c) Single dash — a pause and change of direction. d) Semicolons — separate items in a list that already carry commas.

Q2. Sample answers: a) The rehearsal ran long; nobody complained. b) We packed early; the bus was due at seven. c) The score was tied at full time; extra time would decide the match.

Q3. a) The old hall — built in 1912 — will be repainted this year. b) Our captain — the tallest player on the court — dived for the loose ball. What changes: the dash pair spotlights the detail; brackets would whisper it.

Q4. The dash holds the two ideas in one sentence and lands the timing as a dramatic final point: the letter came on the very day hope ran out. A full stop would keep the facts apart and lose the sting of that timing.

Q5. (a) “first — no, wait” — pause and change of direction; “we’ll ruin —” and “about the scale —” — interruptions; “— a brilliant one, no doubt —” — an aside. (b) The semicolons lay the steps out as one steady, tidy list: JORDAN sounds prepared and in control — or is trying hard to sound that way.

Q6. Sample answers: a) The robot worked perfectly; it only ran into the wall twice. / The robot worked perfectly. It only ran into the wall twice. b) We missed the bus; we had to walk the whole way. / We missed the bus. We had to walk the whole way. c) The cake looked wonderful; everyone took a slice. / The cake looked wonderful. Everyone took a slice. The semicolon versions keep the two ideas close; the full stop versions give each idea its own beat. Either preference is fine with a reason.

Q7. Answers will vary. Check each sentence against its convention: both sides of the semicolon must be complete clauses; the dash pair must lift out cleanly; the single dash must land a final point.

Q8. One possible edit: *The excursion went ahead despite the rain; we visited the museum.* and *The guide showed us a real fossil — it was heavier than it looked.* The semicolon ties the plan to what it made possible; the dash lands the fossil’s weight as a dramatic final point.

Q9. Answers will vary. The version that plays the dashes should show more: the interruptions carry hurry and tension, and the aside lets Priya share a joke with the audience.

Q10. Model: Brackets whisper an aside — the detail is a bonus the reader could skip, and the sentence keeps moving. A dash pair spotlights the same aside: the reader must stop and meet it. Choose brackets for a quiet bonus and dashes for a detail you want noticed.

Q11. a) Semicolon — both sides are complete clauses, and the second contrasts with the first. b) Dash pair — the aside lifts out cleanly and is spotlighted; brackets would only whisper it. c) Single dash — LEI is cut off before finishing, and SAM’s line breaks in. d) Single dash — the mark pauses the sentence and lands the ending as a dramatic final point.

Product task — model response.

The scene uses dashes to put hurry and tension on stage. PRIYA’s warning is cut off before it can finish — “If we rush it we’ll ruin —” — and the dash hands the line to JORDAN, who talks over her. Without the dash, she would complete her warning and he would wait his turn; with it, the audience hears the pair talking across each other. Later, “And if the judge asks about the scale —” is cut off again, so Priya’s worry never lands: the scene keeps rushing past her.

The dashes also carry PRIYA’s sarcasm. Her aside — “a brilliant one, no doubt” — sits between a dash pair, so it is spotlighted for the audience even though the words are aimed at Jordan’s plan. And in the middle of all the rush, JORDAN speaks in semicolons: “Step one, we let the rings dry; step two, we add the moons; step three, we actually finish for once.” The tidy list slows him down and makes him sound in control — or trying hard to be. Together, the marks show two friends under pressure: rushing, cutting in, and still working as a pair.

Cross-references: Section 3F (creating a two-character script with deliberate dialogue choices), Section 5E (reviewing and editing texts, including punctuation). Every scene, sentence and model response in this section is an original text written for this book.