



## Essential English Skills for the Scholar Entering Eleventh Grade

*Below is a list of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills that are most essential for scholars to have fully mastered before starting English 11. Please practice these skills with your scholar from now and throughout the summer to ensure he's ready to rock 11th grade English!*

### Most Important Skill – Reading

Scholars entering the 11th grade should be able to sit down for **at minimum 1 hour straight a day and read**, both for pleasure (for example, reading a novel or comic), and to gather information (for example, reading the latest information about protests around the world).

**Skill #1 - Central Idea** - Scholars entering the 11th grade should be able to read an article or story and then give a **clear, one-sentence explanation of the main point** of the text.

*Examples of Central Ideas:*

- The article, "100 Days After Its First Case," is about the status of businesses opening back up in New York City: which are allowed to open, which are allowed to but aren't opening yet, and how some New Yorkers feel about it all.*
- The story, "Eleven," is about a girl who is humiliated in school on her 11th birthday, and all the complicated feelings she experiences.*

### Skill #2 – Identifying Theme

Scholars entering the 11th grade should be able to read a story or poem and give a **clear, 1-sentence explanation of the theme, or life lesson**, the text is trying to teach.

*Examples of Themes:*

- The theme in the story, "Eleven," by Sandra Cisneros, is that even as you grow up, you still carry all your emotions and experiences with you from when you were younger.*
- The theme of the poem, "Still I Rise," by Maya Angelou, is that someone who has self-confidence and believes in herself cannot be defeated by haters.*

### Skill #3 - Analyzing Language

Scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to look closely at specific words or phrases an author uses in the text and explain the meaning added to the text by that specific word choice – particularly allusion and symbolism.

*Examples of Analyzing Language:*

- In the musical "Hamilton," Angelica refers to Alexander as "Icarus." This is an allusion to the Greek myth in which Icarus flies too close to the sun with his wax wings, falls into the sea, and drowns. Angelica's reference to Alexander as Icarus means he has become too ambitious/greedy and is now experiencing a huge downfall.*
- In The Lord of the Flies, the conch symbolizes democracy and collaboration. When the boys on the island decide they don't need the conch anymore, they break into war against each other and there's total anarchy.*

### Skill #4 – Analyzing Plot Development

Scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to indicate the specific instances which alter and shift the plot of a narrative. Scholars can think critically about the author's intentions and craft.

- In X: A Novel, Malcolm meeting Shorty in Boston is a crucial moment in the plot. Becoming friends with Shorty changes the trajectory of Malcolm's life. This reveals the power of relationships to affect (positively or negatively) the outcomes of your life.*
- In The Hate U Give, the plot shifts when we learn Starr's best friend, a white girl, thinks Khalil was a public threat and thug who would have been killed anyway. The realization of her own friend's stereotyping of Khalil made something change inside Starr, and she knew she had to speak up and tell the truth about Khalil. The author's decisions in this scene highlight the inherent biases white people, even those with black friends, can harbor against people of color.*

### Skill #5 - Academic Discourse

Scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to have a **20-30 minute discussion** about something they've read, watched, or experienced. In that discussion they should:

- clearly state their opinions or ideas
- use concrete evidence (facts, information, texts, experts, data, etc.) to support their main points
- listen to their conversation partner, and directly respond to their conversation partner's ideas and examples OR ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going deeper
- use accountable talk stems:

## Accountable Talk



- Can you tell me more?
- Can you give me another example so I can understand?



- This reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- I believe this is true because.....



- Why do you think that?
- Could it also be that.....?



- Can you give me an example from the text?
- Where can I find that in the text?



- I agree with \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like to add \_\_\_\_\_.



- I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- I respect your opinion but \_\_\_\_\_.

### Skill #6 - Citing Evidence to Support a Claim

Scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to find strong, relevant evidence from texts to prove their point in writing or speech. This includes:

- Citing the evidence (saying where exactly the evidence came from)
- Either quoting it directly or paraphrasing it
- Explaining the meaning of the evidence and how it proves their point

Example: In "Still I Rise," you can tell the narrator is self-confident because she says in stanza 5: "I laugh like I've got gold mines / Diggin' in my own backyard." Her laugh signifies she knows she has a strong and rich spirit, and she doesn't need to worry about what others think.

### Skill #7 – Essay Writing

Scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to write an essay with **one clear point**, and support that point with strong, compelling reasons and evidence, in **less than 45 minutes (one class period)**.

Examples of clear point & compelling reasons to include in an introductory paragraph:

- The real villain in the play "Hamilton" is Alexander Hamilton himself. His own arrogance and insatiable ambition was the cause of every failure and downfall he experienced.
- Video games are healthy for kids. Video games teach kids how to think through problems, develop strategy, and how to collaborate with others.

### Skill #8 - Creating Counterclaims with Rebuttal in an Argumentative Essay

When writing an argumentative essay, scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to identify the counterclaim (the opposite of their opinion) and then explain why the counterclaim is wrong.

Example of a counterclaim if you were writing an essay arguing that the government should be able to enforce mask-wearing for public health.

The counterclaim is in yellow and the rebuttal is in green:

- Some people think that the government shouldn't be allowed to force Americans to wear masks. In his letter to the editor of the Missouriian, Joseph Anderson writes, "The gains masks provide... are non-existent," meaning that wearing a mask doesn't actually help keep anyone healthier. This is just not true. As explained by the Hospital at the University of California – San Francisco, "An experiment using high-speed video found that hundreds of droplets ranging from 20 to 500 micrometers were generated when saying a simple phrase, but that nearly all these droplets were blocked when the mouth was covered by a damp washcloth." Science shows that wearing some kind of covering over your mouth WILL reduce the spread of airborne COVID-droplets.

### Skill #9 - Utilize Conventions of Academic Writing

Scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to write utilizing the conventions of academic writing, including:

- Capitalizing proper nouns and the first word in sentence (Example: "Jamal currently lives on Pitkin Ave in Brooklyn.")
- Using commas in clauses, phrases, and lists (Example: "Even though my teacher, Mrs. Haggins, taught me how to do it, I have since forgotten.")
- Maintaining subject-verb agreement (Example 1: "The subway and the bus are both good options." Example 2: "The number of trains has decreased during the pandemic.")
- Identifying parts of speech and changing a word into different parts of speech to fit a sentence (Example: "I analyze when I read (verb); I can write a good analysis (noun); I want to show off my analytical thinking (adjective).")

### **Skill #10 - Typing**

Scholars entering the 11th grade should be able to type **at least 40 words per minute**.

Search for websites that help you practice typing, such as [typingclub.com](http://typingclub.com).

### **Skill #11 – Email Etiquette**

Scholars entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade should be able to write professional emails, including:

- A short subject to capture the main point of your email
- A professional greeting, such as:
  - *Dear Mr. Morgan,*
  - *Good Morning Ms. Jones,*
- An opening greeting sentence, such as:
  - *I hope you are doing well.*
  - *I hope you're having a good day.*
  - *I hope you and your family are safe during this time.*
  - *Happy Monday!*
- Complete sentences clearly and politely explaining their point, question, etc.
- A closing sentence thanking the person for their time or help, such as:
  - *Thank you for reading my email.*
  - *I appreciate any help you can offer.*
  - *Thank you so much for considering my request.*
  - *Thank you for your time.*
- A professional closing, such as:
  - *Sincerely,*  
*Jordan Pierre*
  - *Be Well,*  
*Neo Fleurimond*
  - *With Gratitude,*  
*Tarif Rose*