

2017 NC English Language Arts Standards Course of Study

Glossary



The purpose of this resource is to provide a consistent definition for specific terms used in the North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study. This list is a reference tool for educators and parents. These terms and definitions can also be found in each grade level *Understanding the ELA NCSoS* document.

active voice	a style that highlights actions performed by the subject(s) of sentences (e.g., “Carter plays basketball” instead of “Basketball was played by Carter.”)
adage	a traditional saying which expresses a generally observable truth about life (e.g., The early bird gets the worm.)
adjective	a word that modifies a noun by providing more detailed information (e.g., fast car)
adverb	a word that modifies an adjective (e.g., extremely fast car), a verb (e.g., ran quickly), or another adverb (e.g., You performed that song very well.)
aesthetics	concerning the nature and appreciation of beauty
allusion	an indirect reference to a person, place, object, literary work, historical event, etc. from an external context
analogy	a comparison drawn between two things for the sake of clarification or explanation
analysis	a detailed examination of the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole
analyze	to critically examine the components of a subject to understand its meaning and/or nature as a whole
approaches	the particular decisions an author makes when deciding how to present a topic
argument	value statement(s) supported by evidence whose purpose is to persuade or explain
artistic medium	the form(s) or material(s) an artist or author uses to express his/her ideas (e.g., words, oil paint, etc.)
audiences	the people who watch, listen to, view, and/or read something presented via an artistic medium
biases	prejudice(s) in favor of or against an individual or group; partiality or preference that prevents objectivity

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cause/effect	cause: the reason(s) that something happens; effect: the consequences (both positive and negative) of the cause
central idea	the unifying concept within an informational text to which other elements and ideas relate
central message	the unifying concept within a text to which other elements and ideas relate
chapter	the main division within a book
character types	refers to the idea that many characters in literature can be grouped broadly into a variety of overarching types that share common characteristics (e.g., static and dynamic characters, round and flat characters, etc.)
claim(s)	an assertion(s) of the truth of something, often a value statement; generally, an author uses evidence to support the assertion of truth
closure	a resolution at the end of an event or literary work
coherent	presented as a unified whole; being consistently and logically connected; more broadly speaking, things which make sense when presented together
cohesion	the action of forming a unified whole; the quality of being united logically
compare	In a general sense, this is to measure or note the similarities and differences between or among objects, people, etc.; however, when used together with contrast , this refers to the highlighting of the ways in which two or more objects, people, etc. are alike or similar.
concrete details	information, examples, data, etc. used as support or evidence for claims, generally during an argument or a persuasive or informational essay
connotation	an emotional or abstract meaning evoked by a word in addition to its literal meaning.
context clues	refers to elements preceding and following an unknown or ambiguous word, phrase, or reference which can help define or identify it

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conventions of spoken and written standard English	the generally accepted rules and practices for speaking and writing in the English language
conversational words/phrases	words and phrases used in everyday conversation which may deviate slightly from standard conventions of English to include idiomatic expressions, slang terms, abbreviations, omissions, etc.
conveyed	to make an idea or feeling known to another person; to carry over from one to another
counterclaims	claims that rebut a previous claim or value statement, generally supported by evidence contrary to that which was presented to support the original claim
decode	to apply knowledge of the relationships of letters and sounds in order to form a word
delineate	to describe something precisely
denotation	the literal definition of a word, generally free of an emotional or cultural context
describe, description, descriptive details	to explain something in words; the details necessary to give a full and precise account
dictating	to say or read aloud with the purpose of having another write down what is spoken
digital sources	refers to sources that present information through digital media, such as digital databases, online articles, websites, etc. Digital sources are cited with a date of access as the information may be dynamically changeable, unlike print and other non-digital formats.
digital tools	tools which are often web-based through which students can dynamically create, share, and collaborate, including tablets, websites, video recording and editing software, cloud-based applications, etc.

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domain-specific vocabulary/words/phrases	Tier 3 words and phrases that are considered unique to a particular subject or discipline that are not typically used during informal conversation
drama	a genre or category of literature generally designed to be presented to an audience by actors on stage that relies heavily on dialogue
editing	the process by which an author improves a text by correcting errors in grammar and/or conventions, (e.g., grammatical, structural, etc.), verifying precision of language, eliminating redundancy, and more
emergent-reader text	texts written using primarily short sentences, sight words, and CVC words, generally predictable to a pattern and using strong picture support
evaluate	to determine quality or value after careful analysis or investigation
event	a thing that happens; an occurrence
evidence	facts and/or information (quotes, statistics, graphs, etc.) presented together as a body of support for a claim or value statement
explicit, explicitly	stated clearly and directly, leaving no room for confusion or interpretation
expression	the process of making one's thoughts, feelings, and ideas known to others; the words, phrases, and clauses used to convey one's thoughts, feelings, and ideas; conveying emotion and feeling when reading aloud through the use of inflection, pacing, etc.
extended definitions	definitions that move beyond basic dictionary definitions to deepen understanding through the use of description, classification, synonyms and antonyms, etymology and history, etc.
fable	a short story, typically featuring animals as characters, that attempts to express life truth, usually through a moral

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figurative language	language that uses words and phrases to express a meaning that is different from the literal meaning (e.g., metaphor, allusion, etc.)
firsthand account	a summary or delineation of events from an original source or personal experience
fluency, fluid reading	oral reading that occurs easily and articulately and conveys an ease of word movement; reading that is pleasing to listen to where words are pronounced accurately, punctuation cues are followed, and sentences are read with expression
folktales	stories originating in popular culture, often passed on through the oral tradition (i.e., word of mouth)
formal discourse	dialogue between two or more people, generally consisting of an exchange of arguments, claims, and counterclaims and using a register appropriate to academic dialogue
formal English, style, task, and use of	English language usage that adheres to grammar and style conventions, is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience, and is objective and free of bias. When spoken, formal usage also generally consists of clear enunciation, consistent eye contact, and appropriate vocabulary. When written, formal usage also generally consists of coherent organization, complex grammatical and syntactic structures, and domain-specific vocabulary.
formatting	the physical presentation of written work used to highlight organization, categories, and topics and to provide consistency to the look of the work (e.g., font size, headers, etc.)
foundational works	works that establish the foundation for the organization, principles, and culture of the country (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, etc.)
general academic	Tier 2 academic words and phrases that students encounter across multiple subjects and disciplines (e.g., analyze, evaluate, compare and contrast, etc.)
genre	a category or type of literature or art characterized by similarities in form, style, and subject

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grammar	the set of rules and conventions that govern the way a particular language functions, including how words and sentences are formed, how punctuation is used, etc.
graphics	pictures, graphs, etc. (i.e., visualizations), generally used to illustrate or further explain a topic
idiom	a phrase or clause whose meaning is typically cultural and/or regional and cannot be determined by the literal meaning of the individual words used (e.g., on pins and needles – to feel anxious or nervous about something)
illustration	a picture or drawing used for explanatory and/or aesthetic purposes; can also refer to an example used as evidence for a claim
independently	on one’s own, without aid from another (such as a teacher)
inference	a conclusion derived from logical reasoning following an investigation of available evidence
informal discourse	dialogue between peers which is relaxed and uses a familiar register; generally, such dialogue is not held to the standard and conventions of formal English
informal English, style, task, and use of	English language usage that is not generally held to grammar and style conventions and may not have a logical structure (e.g., dialogue may jump from one topic to another without transition). When spoken, informal usage may consist of slang terms and idioms; when written, informal usage may lack organization and ignore grammatical rules.
informational text	a nonfiction text whose purpose is to provide information about or explain a topic (e.g., infographic, advertisement, documentary film, etc.)
interact	to act in such a manner as to influence another
interpretations	explanations or representations of what is obscure or unknown based upon the viewer’s/reader’s understanding of the information and/or topic; multiple interpretations are often possible based on information provided and the format/medium of presentation
key details	specific and important parts of the text that provide information, support, and elaboration

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key ideas	most important thoughts addressed in a text or discussion
line of reasoning	a series of claims, points, and supporting pieces of evidence, each related to one another, delineated in such a manner as to show a connection between a claim or argument and the conclusion being drawn
linking words and phrases	words and phrases that connect one sentence, paragraph, idea, etc. to a subsequent one, allowing readers to see the connection between such elements and to progress smoothly from one idea to the next (e.g., first, next, last; furthermore; on the other hand; etc.)
literal language, word/phrase meanings	language (i.e., words and phrases) that is used factually (i.e., according to the actual definition) and explicitly, allowing no room for interpretation or inference (Note: See, as a contrast, idiom and figurative language)
main idea(s)/topic	the primary or central topic(s) of a text or discussion that is supported and developed by other, supporting points/ideas, distinguishable from ideas and topics that can be eliminated without changing the overall meaning
major events	the most important events that occur within a literary work; similar to main ideas, major events cannot be eliminated without changing the primary progression of the work or the development of the characters
medium	the form(s) or material(s) an artist or author uses to express his/her ideas (e.g., poem, oil paint, etc.)
mood	the atmosphere or general feeling evoked in a reader while reading, developed through the author's use of diction, style, and figurative language
moral	relating to the principles of right and wrong concerning human behavior; a lesson or general truth learned from a story or experience
morphology	the study of the form of words and how words are formed, concerning the study of roots (i.e., bases) and affixes (i.e., prefixes and suffixes)
motive/motivations	the reason for a particular action; that which gives purpose to an action or behavior

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multimedia component	the part or piece of a larger whole (e.g., a speech or presentation) that is constructed using more than one medium of expression (e.g., a piece that combines audio and video)
multiple-meaning words and phrases	words and phrases that have more than one meaning (e.g., elephant’s trunk / car trunk)
multisyllabic	having more than one syllable, often requiring the application of phonics and word analysis knowledge and skills
myths	traditional, legendary stories, featuring supernatural beings, heroes, and/or ancestral figures which often explain the history and/or culture of a people or explain a natural phenomenon
norms and conventions of the discipline	refers to the generally accepted rules and practices regarding style, format, publication, etc. of particular disciplines or fields of study which are distinct from (and often in addition to) the conventions of standard English (e.g., academic theses generally have prescribed chapters)
nuance	a subtle difference or variation in a shade of meaning, significance, or expression (e.g., happy compared to giddy)
objective summary	a brief account of a text’s central or main points, themes, or ideas that is free of bias, prejudice, and personal opinion and does not incorporate outside information
objective tone	a neutral tone an author adopts that maintains distance from the topic under consideration, so it is of bias, prejudice, and personal opinion (i.e., such a tone is generally adopted during informational writing, the purpose of which is to explain or inform, not persuade)
observation	a statement or comment based on something one has seen, heard, or noticed; the acquisition of information and/or knowledge based on something one has seen, heard, or noticed
pacing	the speed at which a story progresses, evidence is presented, and/or information is delineated, affecting the overall tone of a literary work (e.g., a rapid, clipped pace inspires a sense of urgency)
paraphrase	express the meaning of something written or spoken using different words, generally for the purpose of clarification or understanding

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passive voice	a style that highlights actions that have been performed, as opposed to who performed them, generally, if present at all, actors appear as the object(s) of sentences (e.g., A crime was committed last night.)
perspective	an attitude toward or outlook on something
phrase(s)	a small group of words representing a conceptual unit, containing either a subject or a verb, but not both. Both a subject and a verb would constitute a clause. (e.g., “ Running through the forest , she breathed in the fresh, crisp air.”)
plot	the sequence of events in a story, play, movie, etc.
poem	a literary work, generally composed in verse and using figurative language, typically composed using a set structure (i.e., organizational rules)
point of view	a narrator’s, writer’s, or speaker’s position with regard to the events of a narrative; one’s stance on events or information given his/her orientation (physically and/or mentally) to the events or information; the vantage point from which one relates the events of a story or makes an argument
proficient/ proficiently	competent, skilled, and/or showing knowledge and aptitude in doing something; the level at which one is able to complete a particular skill, such as reading complex texts, with success
prose	language presented (either as written or spoken) in its ordinary form, that is without rhythm, rhyme, or meter
proverb	a short, pithy saying or expression that states a general life truth or piece of advice (e.g., Laughter is the best medicine.)
publish	to prepare and distribute for consumption (i.e., reading, viewing, listening, etc.) by the public; to print, either physically or digitally in order to make something generally known or available
punctuation	marks (often small) that are used to separate written elements, clarify meaning, guide pacing, and indicate inflection (e.g., period, comma, parentheses, question mark, etc.)

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purpose	the reason for a particular action or creation (e.g., literary work or speech); the reason for which something exists (e.g., to persuade, to inform, to express, and/or to entertain)
quantitatively	in such a manner that allows something to be measured by numbers and/or ranking; (contrast with qualitatively – in such a manner that allows something to be measured in terms of descriptive experience and reflection)
range/range of tasks, purposes, and audiences	the production of written and spoken works covers a variety tasks (including, but not limited to, speaking, presenting, and writing), purposes (e.g., to persuade, to inform, to express, and/or to entertain), and audiences (which requires shifts in register)
reasons/reasoning	an explanation or justification for a claim, action, or value statement; the process of thinking through an argument, forming judgments, and drawing conclusions using a process of logic
recount	to give an account of an event or an experience in chronological order (a skill between retelling and summarizing)
reference materials	sources that provide information about a topic under investigation; materials that a researcher consults for facts and data, citing as necessary
reflection	lengthy consideration and thought given to some topic or idea based on what is known or has been learned about it
relevant evidence, observations, ideas, descriptive details	details, and other elements, that are closely connected and appropriate to that which is being considered, argued, or explained; when making claims, authors choose evidence, details, etc. that are closely related to the idea being expressed by the claim
research (short or more sustained)	an investigation into and study of relevant materials and resources for the purpose of identifying information, establishing facts, drawing conclusions, finding connections, etc.; students conduct short research investigations (e.g., reading a biography of a historical figure) in order to create context and foundations for learning; students conduct more sustained research (e.g., consulting a variety of sources on the ethics surrounding growth hormones) in order to gather and synthesize (either as evidence for claims or data to present/explain) information from a variety of sources

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respond	to say, show, and/or act in response to a prompt which may be a question, an action or event, a claim or counterclaim, etc.
retell	to state, either verbally or through writing, events and details that are remembered from something that has been read or heard; may or may not have the same chronological structure as the original
revision/revising	the process of rereading something that has been produced and making changes in order to clarify meaning, improve cohesion, evaluate the effectiveness of information and evidence, etc.; distinguished from editing which is largely related to correcting errors
rhetoric/rhetorical feature	language (or the art of using language) designed to be persuasive or effective in supporting a claim such that readers or listeners come to agree with the claim, often making use of figurative, sensory, and evocative language; an element of a large literary work that is particularly designed to have a persuasive or emotional impact
rhythm	the pattern of beats, sounds, etc., usually within poetic verse or song, that alerts readers or listeners to the tempo and pacing of the text; the flow of words and other elements related to stressed and unstressed (or short and long) syllables
salient	most important or worthy of notice; prominent
scientific ideas or concepts	ideas and/or innovations that come about through a process of scientific investigation and inquiry; (generally, scientific ideas and concepts build upon past discoveries and ideas, building gradually over time in a manner that can be delineated by the connections between one idea/concept and the next)
search tool	a web-based tool that conducts a search of the content of millions of webpages in order to find items similar or identical to the search parameters defined by the user; (Note: Search tools return results from other websites and sources; they are not, in and of themselves, citable sources.)
secondhand account	an account (i.e., retelling, recount, etc.) of an event or topic based on research, instead of firsthand experience

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self-correct	one recognizes when he/she has made an error (e.g., in the decoding of a word being read) and fixes the error without intervention from an external source, such as a teacher
sensory language/details	words or details (e.g., descriptions) in a literary work that relate to the way things are perceived by the senses
sequence/sequence of events	a particular (e.g., chronological, logical, etc.) way in which events, ideas, etc. follow each other
series	a set of related/similar things (e.g., people, books, events, etc.) coming after one another (e.g., a series of books or TV episodes)
setting	the time and place of the action in a book, play, story, etc.
shared research	a collaborative approach to research where different researchers investigate various aspects of the topic under consideration in order to come back together to create a collaborative whole
spatial relationships	the manner in which one thing relates to another with regard to location in physical space, often indicated by prepositions, such as besides, under, on, etc.
stanza	the primary organizing structure in poetry and verse that forms the basic recurring measure, generally separating one main idea, point, or event from another, similar to paragraphs in prose writing
strengthen	to increase the rhetorical and/or argumentative impact of a written or spoken work by revising for concision, clarity, and cohesion; providing better and/or more evidence as support for claims and value statements; eliminating wordiness, redundancy, and confusion, etc.
strong and thorough textual evidence	evidence (see evidence) that is judged to be powerful (i.e., having greater rhetorical value) when compared to other information, facts, and data that could be used for support (strong) and encompasses each facet of a particular argument or set of claims such that no area is left vulnerable to simple counter-claims (thorough)

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style	a particular manner of doing something (e.g., writing, painting, speaking, etc.) characteristic to an individual (e.g., author, singer, etc.), region, time, artistic/literary movement, etc.; in writing, style includes word choice, fluency, voice, sentence structure, figurative language, and syntax
suffixes	an element appended to the end of a word root to change the meaning or to form a derivative (e.g., -ing: run à running)
summary/summarize	a brief statement of the main points of a larger work or text; the act of providing such a statement or account
supporting detail	a piece of information, data, evidence, etc. that adds support to a claim, value statement, or main idea (i.e., strengthens the argument)
syllabication	the division of words into syllables (e.g., syllable à syl – la – ble)
syntax/syntactic	relating to the arrangement of words and phrases in order to create well-formed sentences, tied to generally accepted rules of grammar and conventions of style
task	(as part of the task, purpose, and audience relationship) – the specific product or type of product one is completing (e.g., editorial article, friendly letter, etc.), which greatly influences the choices an author makes (e.g., one would likely adopt an informal register when writing a friendly letter)
technical procedure	a series of actions or set of steps completed in a certain manner or order related to a particular subject, discipline, etc. (e.g., mathematics: order of operations) (Note: Students are not so much looking at what technical procedures are, but rather at the connection between them, that is, the importance of procedural order and the manner in which steps build on and relate to previous ones.)
temporal relationships	the manner in which one thing relates to another with regard to location in time; often indicated by prepositions, such as before, during, after, etc.
temporal transition words/phrases	words and phrases that are used to indicate a shift from one topic, idea, point, step, etc. to another where the timing of events is important (e.g., first, next, last; previously; etc.)

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text	anything that students can read, write, view, listen to, or explore, including books, photographs, films, articles, music, art, and more
text complexity band	stratification of the levels of intricacy and/or difficulty of texts, corresponding to associated grade levels (2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-12), determined by three factors: 1) qualitative dimensions (levels of meaning, language complexity as determined by the attentive reader), 2) quantitative dimensions (word length and frequency, sentence length, and cohesion), and 3) reader and task considerations (factors related to a specific reader such as motivation, background knowledge, persistence; others associated with the task itself such as the purpose or demands of the task itself)
text features	components of a story, article, etc. that are supplemental to the main body of the text, including, but not limited to, headings, indexes, sidebars, pictures, and captions
textual evidence	evidence found within a particular text used to support or explain conclusions, opinions, and/or assertions about the text itself
theme	the subject or underlying meaning that a literary text directly or indirectly explains, develops, and/or explores
tone	the attitude an author takes toward the subject or topic of a text, generally revealed through word choice, perspective, or point of view
topic	the subject or matter being discussed or written about in a text, speech, etc.
transition(s)/ transitional words	words and phrases that are used to indicate a shift from one topic, idea, point, step, etc. to another; words that connect one element (e.g., sentence, paragraph, section, idea, etc.) to another, allowing an author to highlight the nature of the relationship and/or connection between them
usage	the manner in which language is used, closely related to style and tone; the way in which a word or phrase is used according to standard English conventions
word relationship	the manner in which words relate to one another (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, homophones, etc.)