

Suggested activities for prospective A Level Language students

A Level Language is quite different from GCSE, so there are a few things you can do and look at to a) ensure it is the course for you and b) help get prepared for 6th form study.

1. The area most students find challenging at the start is the labelling of language features. It may not be the most interesting aspect of the course, but it gives you the foundations and language to use to write about the interesting topics. So, learning to identify word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives etc) sentence and clause types, tenses, semantic fields etc would be very useful. It is an area you may want to leave to the lessons in some ways - but there are also thousands of websites which will help you if you want to choose some of these areas to try to master. And, with this protracted enforced break from school, it is a good way to keep your current language knowledge fresh. Some recommended sites (though there are many others):

[Grammar A-Z](#) (This is now called lexico.com and has all sort of other interesting sections if you click on the explore tab).

[Free English Grammar Lessons and Tests](#) (don't be fooled by the name - it covers simple grammar, but also complex aspects such as adverbial clauses and past perfect progressive tense!)

<http://www.bethkemp.co.uk/grammar.html> (again, this website is excellent for other aspects of the course too - use the navigation tabs under 'student' at the top).

2. The other topics you'd cover in Lower Sixth include: the rules and structure of conversation; the impact of gender on the English people use; the attitudes people hold towards accents and dialects within Britain.
3. If you start with gender, then look up the gradually changing views and theories - from Robin Lakoff, to Deborah Tannen, Dale Spender, Jennifer Coates, Jenny Cheshire and Deborah Cameron. The last one is the most recent - and you'll find lots of articles by her and references to her books too - such as *The Myth of Mars and Venus* (in which she challenges populist beliefs of people like John Gray that men and women are so totally different).

[Deborah Cameron article](#)

[Site with some Cameron videos](#)

There are lots of articles about this issue and people's attitudes towards it in the newspapers. Try starting with the Guardian's Comment is Free section and search for the names or topics above: [Opinion](#)

4. There are also lots of articles in e-magazine (designed for all A level English students). If you sign in here: <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/e-magazine/emag-login/>

And use the search engine, you can find articles on Language Issues such as those above and many more.

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5. In terms of books - there are many out there. Anything by David Crystal (also good on youtube, but mainly for u6th topics like history and change in English). Bill Bryson's "Mother Tongue" is entertaining, but mainly historical too.
6. The bbc is a great source - here is a link to Radio 4's Word of Mouth which has many past episodes still available to listen to and you can scroll through and find a topic that interests you, from Gender, to Biscuit names, to Solving crimes with forensic linguistics! [Radio 4 - Word of Mouth - Available now](#)
7. Stephen's Fry's TV series Planet Word was good too. It's also a book - but the TV series is probably better. It seems to be on a site called dailymotion, but I don't know much about it so cannot recommend the site or not.
8. Otherwise, practising reading and writing in the styles you enjoy - whether it is story or journalistic, for example - would be great preparation for later coursework. Futurelearn offers a fairly formal 8 week course you can sign up to for free, but there's advice everywhere on the internet too.
[Online Fiction Writing Course: Start Writing Fiction](#)