Glossary of Key Terms

Every effort has been made to ensure that the phrasing of the Standards is as clear and free of jargon as possible. When used, specialized and discipline-specific terms (e.g., simile, stanza, declarative sentence) typically conform to their standard definition, and readers are advised to consult high-quality dictionaries or standard resources in the field for clarification. The terms defined below are limited to those words and phrases particularly important to the Standards and that have a meaning unique to this document. CCSS refers to the main Common Core State Standards document; the names of various sections (e.g., “Reading”) refer to parts of this appendix.

Definitions of many important terms associated with reading foundational skills appear in Reading Foundational Skills, pages 18–24. Descriptions of the Standards’ three writing types (argument, informative/explanatory writing, and narrative) can be found in Writing, pages 25–26.

Domain-specific words and phrases – Vocabulary specific to a particular field of study (domain), such as the human body (CCSS, p. 32); in the Standards, domain-specific words and phrases are analogous to Tier Three words (Language, p. 35).

Editing – A part of writing and preparing presentations concerned chiefly with improving the clarity, organization, concision, and correctness of expression relative to task, purpose, and audience; compared to revising, a smaller-scale activity often associated with surface aspects of a text; see also revising, rewriting

Emergent reader texts – Texts consisting of short sentences constituted of learned sight words and CVC words; may also include rebuses to represent words that cannot yet be decoded or recognized; see also rebus

Evidence – Facts, figures, details, quotations, or other sources of data and information that provide support for claims or an analysis and that can be evaluated by others; should appear in a form and be derived from a source widely accepted as appropriate to a particular discipline, as in details or quotations from a text in the study of literature and experimental results in the study of science

Focused question – A query narrowly tailored to task, purpose, and audience, as in a research query that is sufficiently precise to allow a student to achieve adequate specificity and depth within the time and format constraints

Formal English – See standard English

General academic words and phrases – Vocabulary common to written texts but not commonly a part of speech; in the Standards, general academic words and phrases are analogous to Tier Two words and phrases (Language, p. 35)

Independent(ly) – A student performance done without scaffolding from a teacher, other adult, or peer; in the Standards, often paired with proficient(ly) to suggest a successful student performance done without scaffolding; in the Reading standards, the act of reading a text without scaffolding, as in an assessment; see also proficient(ly), scaffolding

More sustained research project – An investigation intended to address a relatively expansive query using several sources over an extended period of time, as in a few weeks of instructional time

Point of view – Chiefly in literary texts, the narrative point of view (as in first- or third-person narration); more broadly, the position or perspective conveyed or represented by an author, narrator, speaker, or character
Print or digital (texts, sources) – Sometimes added for emphasis to stress that a given standard is particularly likely to be applied to electronic as well as traditional texts; the Standards are generally assumed to apply to both

Proficient(ly) – A student performance that meets the criterion established in the Standards as measured by a teacher or assessment; in the Standards, often paired with independent(ly) to suggest a successful student performance done without scaffolding; in the Reading standards, the act of reading a text with comprehension; see also independent(ly), scaffolding

Rebus – A mode of expressing words and phrases by using pictures of objects whose names resemble those words

Revising – A part of writing and preparing presentations concerned chiefly with a reconsideration and reworking of the content of a text relative to task, purpose, and audience; compared to editing, a larger-scale activity often associated with the overall content and structure of a text; see also editing, rewriting

Rewriting – A part of writing and preparing presentations that involves largely or wholly replacing a previous, unsatisfactory effort with a new effort, better aligned to task, purpose, and audience, on the same or a similar topic or theme; compared to revising, a larger-scale activity more akin to replacement than refinement; see also editing, revising

Scaffolding – Temporary guidance or assistance provided to a student by a teacher, another adult, or a more capable peer, enabling the student to perform a task he or she otherwise would not be able to do alone, with the goal of fostering the student’s capacity to perform the task on his or her own later on

Short research project – An investigation intended to address a narrowly tailored query in a brief period of time, as in a few class periods or a week of instructional time

Source – A text used largely for informational purposes, as in research

Standard English – In the Standards, the most widely accepted and understood form of expression in English in the United States; used in the Standards to refer to formal English writing and speaking; the particular focus of Language standards 1 and 2 (CCSS, pp. 25, 27, 53, 55)

Technical subjects – A course devoted to a practical study, such as engineering, technology, design, business, or other workforce-related subject; a practical aspect of a wider field of study, such as art or music

Text complexity – The inherent difficulty of reading and comprehending a text combined with consideration of reader and task variables; in the Standards, a three-part assessment of text difficulty that pairs qualitative and quantitative measures with reader-task considerations (CCSS, pp. 30, 57; Reading, pp. 5–17)

Text complexity band – A range of text difficulty corresponding to grade spans within the Standards; specifically, the spans from grades 2–3, grades 4–5, grades 6–8, grades 9–10, and grades 11–CCR (college and career readiness)

Textual evidence – See evidence

With prompting and support/with (some) guidance and support – See scaffolding

* Though Vygotsky himself does not use the term scaffolding, the educational meaning of the term relates closely to his concept of the zone of proximal development. See L. S. Vygotsky (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.