

What characterises an A* student in English?

Reading

Skill	Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows confidence in analysing language – big stuff to small stuff (audience, purpose, genre, layout – sentence types and structure – and words (formal/informal, general/specialist, figures of speech) 	<i>The author employs a style that surprises the reader. Her use of words like “quite” and “almost” suggests that she is taking a detached and analytical approach to hunting: it is as if she does not want to lower herself to their level. The fact that she addresses the reader as ‘you’ draws us in to the world of the text and provokes our interest. Once she has grabbed our attention, she won’t let go.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embeds of very short, well-selected quotations 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every point addresses the questions ‘why?’ or ‘how?’ 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has light-touch use of technical terms rather than demonstrating a tick-list mentality 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes tentative rather than firm statements – exploring rather than stating ideas (‘might, may, seems, appears, suggests’) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relishes the vocabulary of a text and teases out the associations of words 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links ideas to prior reading – ‘the text reminds us of ... / has echoes’ 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writes about reading in an authoritative style (‘we’, not ‘I’), combining short and long sentences, Latinate and vividly familiar words 	

Writing

Skill	Example
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to write impersonally, clearly and securely, with impressive accuracy by self-regulating 	<i>Dear Mr Barton</i> <i>Be assured that I’m writing this with my shirt fully tucked in, wearing no unnecessary jewellery, and – of course – in shoes rather than trainers. I am assuming from the school’s uniform policy that such attention to detail will help me to do better in my English exam.</i> <i>That, after all, seems to be the overarching philosophy of the English education system - including your school – that wearing uniform somehow makes us better students, perhaps even better people ...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands that punctuation is not an after-thought but integral to thinking (eg parenthetical commas and dashes) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses semi-colons to separated linked or contrasting clauses, not the comma splice; and commas for parenthesis 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will have a mixture of precision and interestingness in writing, with a rhythm which demonstrate a familiarity with good prose style 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the way effective writers sometimes clarify and sometimes mystify 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will have lexical variety that avoids repetition, including adept deployment of pronouns 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands the power of simplicity when juxtaposed with complexity (rather than complicatedness) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writes with fluency and panache, and a sense of personal voice and commitment 	

There’s probably other stuff too. To achieve this, these students read a lot and write a lot and, when reading and writing, are aware of the effects they are seeing and creating. They don’t just ‘do’ these things: they **consciously** do them.