



Getting started with Scots in school

Discover how using Scots can support learning in literacy and across the curriculum.

Age: 3-18

CFE Levels: Early to Senior Phase

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

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Contents

About this resource.....	2
Why teach Scots in schools?.....	3
What is Scots?.....	5
Introducing Scots in the classroom.....	6
Teaching different Scots dialects.....	7
Scots writing activities.....	8
Next steps.....	11
Worksheet 1: Match the Words.....	13
Worksheet 2: Body Parts.....	14

About this resource

The activities in this resource have been designed to support the use of Scots in the classroom with ideas for reading, writing, listening and talking as well as suggestions for including Scots in your interdisciplinary learning. The resource is designed to be adaptable to individual needs. Pick and choose from a range of ideas and differentiate as you see fit.

The resource has several aims:

- To show how Scots can enrich the language of the classroom.
- To encourage the use of Scots in literacy programmes
- To support cross curricular planning, involving fun activities
- Suggest useful links to support Scots learning

There is much more to Scots language activities than reciting poetry aloud once a year. Introduce Scots into your classroom today. It his an afa lot gaan fir it!

These resources include a compilation of information contributed by teacher Katrina Lucas, Education Scotland Scots Language Coordinators Diane Anderson and Bruce Eunsen.

Why teach Scots in schools?

Curriculum for Excellence states clearly that all learners should have the opportunity to study Scotland's languages and culture. Using Scots language in classroom activities can add breadth and depth to the Curriculum for Excellence. Some reasons to teach Scots are:

- It develops transferrable skills in language learning
- It gives pupils the confidence to contribute and express themselves
- It helps pupils to appreciate Scotland's heritage
- It helps create effective contributors
- It helps create links between school and home
- It's fun!

Transferrable skills

Research has shown that pupils will be more successful in the acquisition and correct use of English if they are secure in the use of their first language. Scots language is used in everyday experiences at home, in the playground, with family and friends. By valuing the language skills that children bring to school, we provide the learner with a transferrable set of linguistic skills which can be adapted to studying English and other languages. See our article on '[Scots and bilingualism](#)' for more information.

Confidence

Scots is an expressive language, studying Scots develops linguistic confidence, providing learners with the opportunity to freely express themselves in their mother tongue. It also helps pupil develop their identity, a sense of self-worth and citizenship can be fostered for both speakers and learners alike.

Heritage

Schools can acknowledge and celebrate the linguistic and cultural heritage of their pupils and the land in which they are growing up.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) has been ratified by the U.K. Government, Scots is therefore afforded special protection and promotion within the United Kingdom. The Scottish Government has stated categorically that all dialects of Scots are equally valid and that each needs to be preserved along with its distinctive identity. We are responsible for protecting our native language.

Effective contributors

Tourism and the creative industries could benefit from Scots language learning in schools. Scots is currently recognised and used in the Scottish parliament, including the Scottish Government website and swearing in procedures. There is a growing call for Scots to once again feature in a more prominent way in Scotland's other institutions.

Teaching Scots provides the opportunity for Scotland to produce confident players on the world stage, secure in their linguistic and cultural heritage, and aware of their place in Europe and beyond.

Links between school and home

It can help motivate some learners and their families by showing them that the language they use at home is valued in school and allow them to participate in tasks together.

Fun

Learners love lessons that feature Scots. It is different, unexpected and can feel challenging but exciting.

It can help those with English as a second language to feel more valued, with all languages spoken in the class being considered together. It can also be a way back in for those who have felt alienated in school – the reluctant learners who have felt that literacy is not really for them.

For more on the benefits of using Scots in your classroom, see our article [‘Why teach Scots’](#).

What is Scots?

Scots is sometimes described as a dialect of English because of their similarity to one another, but this isn’t the case. Scots is officially recognised as a European Language in its own right, just like French or German.

It’s easy to assume that learners who seem to speak Scots daily know what it is – but this isn’t always the case! Many have been taught that the way they speak is “slang” or “bad English”, so it’s important to teach them that Scots is its own language, with similarities to and differences from English. When introducing Scots language activities to your classroom, it’s a good idea to have an open dialogue with learners about their use and understanding of Scots and English.

For instance, you could give start by giving pupils some common Scots words and asking if they know their English equivalent, or vice versa, to begin to highlight the differences between the languages. If you have a group of pupils who naturally use a lot of Scots, you could pair them up with pupils who mostly use English and ask them to share how they would each answer some easy questions about themselves in both languages. The important thing is to get learners thinking about language and the ways they speak in fun new ways. See Worksheet 1 at the end of this resource for an introductory activity matching up Scots and English words.

Introducing Scots in the classroom

This section will help you to introduce simple activities for use in the classroom. The following activities are designed to give a starting point for those keen to try out Scots with their class while building on their own skills and confidence in the process. With each of them you can ask pupils to find and compare different words in Scots and English, to guide them in beginning to tell the differences between each language.

Action songs

You can use well-known songs in Scots as a way to introduce pupils to vocabulary and Scots language. For example, “Heid, Shooders, Knaps and Taes”.

Identify the various parts of the body with the pupils and through singing the song become familiar with the Scots words for each.

For a writing activity that leads on from singing, draw around one pupil to create a body shape on a large piece of paper which can be used for a wall display. Label each of the body parts in Scots. New words can also be added. See Worksheet 2 at the end of this resource for an individual activity for pupils around body parts and new words to learn. You can extend this activity by adding labels in another language as part of the 1+2 language strategy.

To finish, you could play the game “Simon Says” in Scots. Play the game as usual but using Scots version of words and actions.

Daily routines

A simple way of introducing Scots initially is using Scots language in daily routines. Think about using greetings at the beginning and end of the day, create class and school rules in Scots, a weather chart with Scots words like *dreich*, *snaw*, or *haar*. You could add messages and labels around school buildings. Some schools have recorded their telephone welcome in Scots! Older pupils can make a recording of a weather report and create their own newsroom with bulletins about current or local

affairs.

Scots word mats or word wall

Creating Scots word-mats can help learners to create their own simple texts in Scots while reinforcing features of language and can support dictionary skills.

Take this idea to a wider context and create a Scots graffiti wall that can be added to regularly as learning progresses.

Teaching different Scots dialects

The Scottish Government has stated that all Scots dialects are equally valid and that each individual dialect and its distinctive identity needs to be preserved. Celebrating the use of individual dialects can add richness to any classroom activities.

SQA have included a Scots Language Award which is tailor made for schools and learners studying their local dialect and excelling in their specific regional variety.

By valuing each dialect equally, we can help our young people to respect the way other people in Scotland speak and learn about their own and other cultures and communities.

There are many interesting regional variations of Scots language. Dialects from Shetland and Orkney, Dundee, North East, Glasgow and Edinburgh often have their own specific pronunciations of the most common words and are rich in new and unique vocabulary which is sometimes specific to that one region or area.

[Education Scotland](#) has downloadable vocabulary lists for different Scots dialects, which you can use to get started. You can also use the [Spikkin Scots interactive map](#) with learners to learn more and hear different dialects being spoken.

List of local words

A good place to start is asking pupils to create a list of words that they and their families use which will probably link to the history of their local area. Many words will

be derived from industries such as farming, fishing, crofting and weaving and were an important part of daily life. Grandparents can often support with this activity!

Explore media

Old photographs and film clips can be useful to spark up conversations and discover words used to describe items. A visit to the local library will be able to help with sourcing materials for this activity and librarians are a font of local knowledge!

Scots language has been used in major film productions like Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* and by Disney & Pixar in the computer animation *Brave*.

Children will be familiar with the characters and using clips from films can model developing character traits that they can then use in stories of their own.

Explore local songs and stories

Many of these words can be found in stories, songs and poems celebrated by local Heritage societies who are striving to keep the language alive. It is worth checking for societies in your area as they usually hold competitions for writing poetry and prose with a school and children's section that may inspire your pupils.

Digital storytelling

Digital storytelling is another useful way of embedding the pupil's knowledge of Scots while developing technology skills. Pupils can investigate a topic, include some intergenerational interviews and learn more about the area they live in. Participation in this type of activity allows parents and community to become involved. Find out more about [digital storytelling](#) in the resource available on our website.

Scots writing activities

We hope the activities in this section will inspire you to introduce your learners to try writing Scots in the classroom. We want future generations of Scots people to appreciate the literature of their native country. Use these writing ideas either as a

stand-alone activity or as part of an interdisciplinary approach.

Scots stottin sentences

A great five-minute warm up to any literacy lesson is the Scots stottin sentences activity. Make up a selection of basic Scots sentences for the class, and type each one at the top of their own sheet of A4 paper. Laminate the sheets to make reusable, wipe-clean resources and distribute to pairs or trios.

Ask the learners to improve or 'up-level' the sentences – and be prepared to be amazed at the creativity and engagement that ensues!

One example could be: A daft dug.

Possibly expanded to: A daft dauncin dug.

Further improved by: A daft drookit dauncin dug.

Alternatively, even: A daft drookit dug dauncin in a dub.

This activity is great fun and it does not have to be limited to alliteration. You can also adapt these to different Scots dialects to learn about either your local area, or how dialects are different – but similar – across Scotland.

Cinquin poetry

This type of poetry is great fun and addictive. It suits Scots language work and can easily be adapted to most topics while reinforcing vocabulary and grammar points. This example is straight forward, and the best bit is that it's a five-line poem that doesn't have to rhyme! This shouldn't be too daunting for pupils.

Line 1: one noun/one word title

Line 2: two adjectives to describe the noun

Line 3: three present participles to describe the noun (remember in Scots they will end –in)

Line 4: four word phrase about the noun

Line 5: one synonym for the noun

You will end up with something like this:

Tod
sleekit gleg
lowpin rinnin howkin
gallus tousie wee beastie reiver

Ask pupils to have a go and see what they can come up with! Other poetry ideas you might use are creating an acrostic poem using your favourite Scots word.

Writing instructions in Scots

Write a set of instructions in Scots for others to follow. You might want to work as a class or in pairs to begin with.

Early level: How to play a favourite game, make a model out of recycling

First level: How to make a sandwich, a recipe, play a favourite sport

Second: how to conduct an experiment, bake a cake

Writing using a familiar book written in Scots

Watch our Authors Live [Gruffalo in Scots](#) together on our On Demand library. Using *The Gruffalo* in Scots as your stimulus, ask learners to make a list of all the Scots adjectives used in the book, then find and record their English definitions. Encourage learners to compare their list with the rest of the class to create a joint adjective list. This could then be used to create a “Wanted” poster for the Gruffalo, using as many Scots adjectives as possible. You can extend this activity by creating a storyboard activity where the characters use Scots words inside speech bubbles.

This is just one example of using a book and the activities can be adapted for any of the books which have now been translated into Scots.

Early years will find suggestions in [Scots Books for Bairns](#) in Bookbug resources.

Teachers may find other useful resources on the [Scots Language Centre](#) and [Scots Education](#) websites. They are both good starting points for information about what is current and can help you get started.

Comics

Older pupils may enjoy creating a piece of writing using Scots in comic style and can create their own superheroes to use in their work. Famous characters like Oor Wullie and the Broons can be used to model Scots in comics and provide the pupils with ideas to create their own versions.

Writing competitions

Keep an eye out for competitions that might engage your pupils to write in their mither tongue. Use the Scottish Book Trust website to find out more about [opportunities for young writers](#), including the [Young Scots Writer O the Year Award](#).

Next steps

We hope that you've found this resource useful for starting your journey with Scots in the classroom – but it's only the beginning! There are lots more resources available from [Scottish Book Trust](#), [Scots Language Centre](#), [Scots Hoose](#) and [Education Scotland](#) to help you continue exploring Scots in your classroom.

For specific next steps with lesson planning, we particularly recommend the following resources:

For younger learners, our [Using Roald Dahl in Scots](#) project resource is a great way to build on what children have already learned by applying Scots learning to a familiar story.

For secondary learners, our [Creative Writing in Scots](#) and [Writing Poetry in Scots](#) resources are an excellent way to encourage pupils to creatively explore the language for themselves.

To encourage younger pupils to think more about the language itself, you could also take a look at the [Scots Thesaurus](#) resource from Education Scotland, which uses Scots weather vocabulary to encourage literacy and vocabulary development.

For a deeper engagement with the language from second level up to the senior phase, we'd recommend taking a look at Education Scotland's [History of Scots](#) and [Features of Scots](#) resources, which will aid both teachers and learners in better understanding the historical and contemporary status of the language. Secondary teachers can also access resources from the [Read Older Scots](#) project to for resources and ideas for how to introduce older Scots from the 14th-16th centuries back into the classroom.

Secondary learners can also undertake the [SQA Scots Language Award](#) at levels 3,4,5 and 6, which offers teachers and learners a great variety of methods of exploring the language with optional modules which encourage cross-curricular learning.

Go oan and gie it laldi!

Worksheet 1: Match the Words

Print this page

Draw a line matching up the Scots words with what they mean in English.

Scots	English
Skelp	Fancy
Crabbit	Cry
Gallus	Big
Ken	Child
Dreich	Smack
Muckle	Angry
Greet	Miserable (weather)
Bairn/Wean	Do
Haud	Bold/Cheeky
Dae	Know
Fantoosh	Hold

What other Scots words do you know? Write them in the box below:

Worksheet 2: Body Parts

Print this page

Label the figure with the correct word, draw on facial features and add in new words as you learn them.

Heid	Een
Shooders	Lugs
Knaps	Mooth
Taes	Neb

