**43** The Romans invade Britain, beginning 400 years of control over much of the island.  
  
**410** The Goths (speakers of a now extinct East Germanic language) sack Rome. The first Germanic tribes arrive in Britain.  
  
**Early 5th century** With the collapse of the empire, Romans withdraw from Britain. Britons are attacked by the Picts and by Scots from Ireland. Angles, Saxons, and other German settlers arrive in Britain to assist the Britons and claim territory.  
  
**5th-6th centuries** Germanic peoples (Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians) speaking West Germanic [dialects](http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/dialectterm.htm) settle most of Britain. Celts retreat to distant areas of Britain: Ireland, Scotland, Wales.

**Late 8th century** Scandinavians begin to settle in Britain and Ireland; Danes settle in parts of Ireland.  
  
**Mid 9th century** Danes raid England, occupy Northumbria, and establish a kingdom at York. Danish begins to influence English.  
  
**Late 9th century** King Alfred of Wessex (Alfred the Great) leads the Anglo-Saxons to victory over the Vikings, translates Latin works into English, and establishes the writing of [prose](http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/proseterm.htm) in English. He uses the English language to foster a sense of national identity

**10th century** English and Danes mix fairly peacefully, and many Scandinavian (or Old Norse) [loanwords](http://grammar.about.com/od/il/g/loanwordterm.htm) enter the language, including such common words as *sister, wish, skin*, and *die*.  
  
**1000** Approximate date of the only surviving manuscript of the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, composed by an anonymous poet between the 8th century and the early 11th century.  
  
**1066** The Norman Invasion: King Harold is killed at the Battle of Hastings, and William of Normandy is crowned King of England. Over succeeding decades, Norman French becomes the language of the courts and of the upper classes; English remains the language of the majority. Latin is used in churches and schools. For the next century, English, for all practical purposes, is no longer a written language.

**1170-1209** The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are founded.  
  
**Mid to late 14th century**  The Black Death kills roughly one-third of England's population. Geoffrey Chaucer composes *The Canterbury Tales* in Middle English. English becomes the official language of the law courts and replaces Latin as the medium of instruction at most schools. John Wycliffe's English translation of the Latin Bible is published. The [Great Vowel Shift](http://grammar.about.com/od/fh/g/GreatVowelShift.htm) begins.  
  
**1362** The Statute of Pleading makes English the official language in England. Parliament is opened with its first [speech](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/speechterm.htm) delivered in English.  
  
**1399** At his coronation, King Henry IV becomes the first English monarch to deliver a speech in English.  
  
**Late 15th century** William Caxton brings to Westminster (from the Rhineland) the first printing press and publishes Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. [Literacy](http://grammar.about.com/od/il/g/literacyterm.htm) rates increase significantly, and printers *begin* to standardize English [spelling](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/spellingterm.htm).

**Early 16th century** The first English settlements are made in North America. William Tyndale's English translation of the Bible is published. Many Greek and Latin [borrowings](http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/borrowingterm.htm) enter English.  
  
**1542** In his *Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge*, Andrew Boorde illustrates regional [dialects](http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/dialectterm.htm).  
  
**1590-1611** William Shakespeare writes his *Sonnets* and the majority of his plays.  
  
**1600** The East India Company is chartered to promote trade with Asia, eventually leading to the establishment of the British Raj in India.  
  
**1604** Robert Cawdrey's *Table Alphabeticall*, the first English [dictionary](http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/dictionaryterm.htm), is published. (See [The Earliest English Dictionaries](http://grammar.about.com/od/words/a/earlydiction.htm).)  
  
**1611** The Authorized Version of the English Bible (the "King James" Bible) is published, greatly influencing the development of the written language.  
  
**1622** *Weekly News*, the first English newspaper, is published in London.

**1712** Anglo-Irish satirist and cleric [Jonathan Swift](http://grammar.about.com/od/rhetoricstyle/a/SwiftSimple.htm) proposes the creation of an English Academy to regulate English [usage](http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/usageterm.htm) and "ascertain" the language.  
  
**1755** [Samuel Johnson](http://grammar.about.com/od/essaysonstyle/a/sjohnsonstyle.htm) publishes his two-volume *Dictionary of the English Language*.  
  
**1762** Robert Lowth publishes his *Short Introduction to English Grammar*.  
  
**1806** The British occupy Cape Colony in South Africa.  
  
**1828** Noah Webster publishes his *American Dictionary of the English Language*.

**Mid 19th century** A [standard variety of American English](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/stamenglishterm.htm) develops. English is established in [Australia](http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/AustralianEnglishterm.htm), [South Africa](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/SouthAfricanEnglishterm.htm), [India](http://grammar.about.com/od/fh/g/Hinglish.htm), and other British colonial outposts.

**1876** Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone, thus modernizing private communication.  
  
**1922** The British Broadcasting Company (later renamed the British Broadcasting Corporation, or [BBC](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/receivedpronunciationterm.htm)) is established.  
  
**1928** *The Oxford English Dictionary* is published.  
  
**1947** India is freed from British control and divided into Pakistan and India. The constitution provides that English remain the official language for 15 years. New Zealand gains its independence from the U.K. and joins the Commonwealth.  
  
**1950s** The number of speakers using [English as a second language](http://grammar.about.com/od/e/g/English-As-A-Second-Language-Esl.htm) exceeds the number of [native speakers](http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/nativespeakerterm.htm).  
  
**1978** *The Linguistic Atlas of England* is published.  
  
**1994** [Text messaging](http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/textingterm.htm) is introduced, and the first modern blogs go online.

**1997** The first social networking site (SixDegrees.com) is launched. (Friendster is introduced in 2002, and both MySpace and Facebook begin operating in 2004.)  
  
**2000** The Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED Online) is made available to subscribers.  
  
**2006** Twitter, a social networking and microblogging service, is created by Jack Dorsey.