Where Does English Come From?

A Brief History of the Language You're Learning - ECS Scotland

1. Did You Know?

- English is spoken by over 1.5 billion people, but it hasn't always sounded the way it does today.
- Modern English includes words from Latin, French, Old Norse, and German thanks to centuries of invasions, trade, and travel.
- Your vocabulary is more international than you think! For example:
- Café, menu, language → from French
- Kindergarten, rucksack, wanderlust → from German
- Agenda, status, video → from Latin

2. Where English Comes From: A Quick Timeline

Date	What Happened?	Language Impact
500 CE	Germanic tribes arrived in Britain	Old English began – sounded more like German
800-1000s	Vikings invaded	Added Old Norse words like 'egg', 'sky', 'knife'
1066	Norman conquest	10,000+ French words entered English
1400s-1600s	Chaucer & Shakespeare	Shaped Middle and early Modern English
Today	Global use and internet	English continues to evolve daily

3. How is English Connected to Other Languages?

- English is part of the Indo-European language family the same as:
- Spanish, French, Italian (Romance languages)
- German, Dutch, Swedish (Germanic languages)
- Hindi, Persian, Greek and more

Try This: Think of a word you know in your native language and English. Is there a similar sound or meaning? They might be related!

4. Explore More: Language Maps and Tools

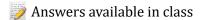
• LL-Map: Explore world language maps – https://llmap.org/

- Ethnologue: All the world's languages https://www.ethnologue.com/
- EndangeredLanguages.com: Hear rare languages http://endangeredlanguages.com/
- Multitree: See which languages are related to English http://multitree.org/
- TED-Ed: How Languages Evolve https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-languages-evolve-alexgendler

5. Bonus Vocabulary Challenge

Try grouping these words into their language family origins:

Justice – Kindergarten – Video – Café – Wanderlust – Parliament – Agenda – Sky – School – Flavour – Chef – Rucksack



- While You Watch: Answers
- 1. What do the dialects spoken in dozens of countries have in common with Chaucer's writings or Beowulf?
- → They are all part of the English language, which has evolved over generations, changing through history but remaining connected.
 - 2. What caused so many French and Latin words to enter the English language?
- → The Norman invasion of England in 1066 brought a ruling class that spoke French, introducing many French and Latin words.
 - 3. Where did Old English come from?
- → It came from Germanic dialects spoken by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes who arrived in the 5th and 6th centuries.
 - 4. How did Viking invasions affect English?
- → The Vikings added words from Old Norse, influencing vocabulary and pronunciation (e.g. "skirt" and "skull").
 - 5. What is Proto-Germanic?
- \rightarrow It's the ancient ancestor of Germanic languages like English, German, and Swedish, spoken around 500 BCE.
 - 6. What is Proto-Indo-European and where was it spoken?
- \rightarrow It's the ancient common ancestor of many modern languages, spoken about 6,000 years ago in modern Ukraine/Russia.
 - 7. How do linguists trace the roots of English?
- \rightarrow By comparing sound changes, grammar patterns, and vocabulary across related languages (comparative linguistics).
- 8. Why don't we have written records of Proto-Germanic or Proto-Indo-European?
- \rightarrow These languages were spoken before writing systems existed, so they had to be reconstructed through comparison.
 - 9. What are some languages distantly related to English?
- \rightarrow Hindi, Persian, and Celtic languages they all belong to the Indo-European language family.
 - 10. What is one amazing fact at the end of the video?
- → Nearly 3 billion people today speak versions of English shaped by 6,000 years of history.