

The Languages of Scotland

Gaelic, Scots, and English

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INTRODUCTION

This unit supports schools doing Scottish Studies from upper primary onwards or doing the certificate in Scottish Studies or the Scots Language Award in secondary. It is intended to raise awareness about the history of our languages, develop appreciation of their legacy and explore issues around their survival, use and development today.

Part One looks firstly at our **linguistic history** and then goes on to explore issues of discrimination and prejudice that have affected both Scots and Gaelic, and considers their importance and role in a multi-lingual multi-cultural Scotland.

Part Two provides an **introduction to Gaelic** for children who do not come from a Gaelic speaking area, and highlights how much Gaelic has left its mark on our landscape, culture, language and names more than we perhaps realise.



PART ONE: THE LINGUISTIC HISTORY OF SCOTLAND

In Scotland we have three languages that have been used for centuries by Scottish people and so can be described as our 'native' languages. Most Scots are probably bi-lingual, that is, we can speak two of our languages, often without realising it, and some of us are even tri-lingual, i.e. can speak in three languages, while many recent incomers to Scotland have probably grown up learning several languages.

Class discussion

Can you understand or speak more than one of these? How would you describe the language or languages you speak or understand? Do you know anyone who can speak all three of Scotland's languages? What other language(s) do you think we should learn or that you would like to learn? Why? Do you think we should have only one 'national' language? Which? Why? What advantages are there to learning several?

The history of our languages

Our oldest language, **Gaelic**, is completely different from our other two languages because it comes from a different family of languages. It is a **Celtic** language that is closely related to Irish Gaelic and a more distant relative to Welsh, a descendant from the ancient Celtic language of the Brythons or Britons whose language was spoken throughout most of the British Isles, during the Iron Age and Roman period. Earlier inhabitants of Scotland, called the Picts (name used for them by the Romans), possibly spoke an older Celtic tongue that may have been related to Brythonic and survives in place names, especially in the north east, e.g. words like *aber* or *pit*, as in Aberdeen and Pittodrie.

The Scots (again a name given by the Romans) came here from Ireland over 1,500 years ago and eventually their Gaelic became the language of nearly the whole of Scotland. Gaelic was probably spoken by most of the population up until about the thirteenth century, but with the spread of English/Scots across the Lowlands and the use of Norman French by those with power and influence, i.e. the king and the nobility, Gaelic eventually became the language of only the Highland parts of Scotland over the following centuries.

Scots and English could be described as sort of cousin languages as they share common ancestors in the **Anglo-Saxon** languages of the Germanic tribes who moved to Britain around

the fifth century AD. The speech of the Angles, who settled mainly in the north of England, was in turn strongly influenced by later Danish migrants, while other Viking incomers also brought their **Norse** tongue to other parts of Scotland, mainly the Western Isles and the Northern Isles, Orkney and Shetland, but it can also be found in place names further south such as *firth* for a sea inlet or fiord or *fell* for a mountain. We still have plenty of words in our vocabulary of Norse origin, e.g. ain, brecks, brig, flit, fae / frae, graith (tools, etc.) kirk, lowp, lug, mask (tea), skirl, and so on.

Over a period of time this 'Inglis' from the north of England gradually moved north and was widely spoken in southern Scotland by around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but in the following centuries it gradually developed into a distinctly different dialect from its English cousin and became known as 'Scottis,' though in earlier times, the term 'Scots' was used to refer to Gaelic, as the language of the Scots from Ireland.

In the century after the Norman conquest of England (1066), many Norman lords obtained land and power in Scotland (e.g. the Bruce family). Their **French** language and culture also influenced our speech, as did later close links between Scotland and France which lasted up until the reign of Mary Queen of Scots in the 1560s, e.g. French words like *asht*, *caddie*, *grosset*, *gardez loo*, *Hogmanay!*

Our trading and academic links with the Low Countries also gave us many words of **Dutch** origin (also a Germanic language), such as, calland / callant (a lad), doited / dytit (daft), gowf, howf, hunkers, pinkie, redd up, scone, etc.

While English has many words that come from **Latin** and we still use many everyday Latin abbreviations (e.g., i.e., p.s., n.b., a.m. and p.m.) Scots and Gaelic also have words of Latin origin, such as jotter, janitor, beadle, dux and Scots law is full of Latin terms. It was the language of the church and learning for many centuries and was still needed for entry to some university courses, e.g. law and medicine, well into the twentieth century.

By the fourteenth century, the Lowland Scots tongue (sometimes called *Lallans* or in the north east, *the Doric*) was replacing Gaelic as the dominant language and was eventually used by everyone, from the king and the court, diplomats and poets, down to the poorest peasants. By the fifteenth century the laws of the land and most written communication were in Scots, though Gaelic was still the dominant language in the Highlands and islands and even survived in parts of the Lowlands, especially Galloway, until the eighteenth century and on Arran until the early twentieth century.

However, by the early seventeenth century, the Scots language had also suffered several blows to its power and status: firstly, after the Protestant Reformation (1560) new versions of the bible were printed in English and used throughout the land, secondly when James VI became James I of the new United Kingdom in 1603, the Scottish court moved to London and so the language used by the rich and the powerful, as well as writers and scholars, became increasingly English over the next century or so. From the eighteenth century onwards, especially after the **Union of the Parliaments in 1707**, upper-class Scots began to feel that their Scots tongue was an incorrect or inferior version of English and some writers even took great pains to avoid any 'Scotticisms' in their work as they felt they would betray their lack of education or refinement.

In spite of many of our greatest writers continuing to use Scots or Gaelic, and a growing pride in our national bard, Robert Burns, a negative or uncertain attitude towards our native tongues was well established in Scottish society by the end of the eighteenth century and was strongly reinforced by the educational system in the nineteenth century. Even into the second half of the twentieth century, many Scottish children were still taught to feel that their native languages were inferior to English and children were often ridiculed or even punished by their teachers for speaking Scots or Gaelic in school, e.g. as described in the novel *Docherty* by William McIlvanney (Book 1, chapter 15).

Since Scots and English share common ancestors, they share many words, even if they are often pronounced very differently today, while Scots has kept a lot of older words or pronunciations that modern English has dropped or changed. Yet even when we are speaking English, we speak it with a very different accent from people south of the Border, and we also speak with many different accents within Scotland. Can you name or even describe some of these different accents or dialects? Do you have friends or family that use any of them? What is the difference between an accent and a dialect?



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CLOSE READING QUESTIONS

(A) Mainly on understanding

MARKS

1. a) What is Scotland's oldest language? (para. 1) (1)
b) Gaelic is completely different because (1)
c) Gaelic is closely related to _____ and a much more distant relative to _____ which is descended from _____ (complete the gaps) ... (3)
2. a) What were the early inhabitants of Scotland called? (1)
b) Who called them this? (1)
c) What language do we think they spoke? (para. 2) (1)
3. Where did the Scots come from and what language did they speak? (2)
4. How long was Gaelic the language of most Scots? (need to do your sums). (1)
5. a) Find two expressions in para. 3 that shows Scots and English are related. (2)
b) Whose language had a strong influence on the language of the Angles? (1)
c) Did the language of the Norsemen only influence the Western and Northern Isles?
Give a reason for your answer. (2)
6. a) How did 'Inglis' (English) come to be spoken in much of Scotland? (1)
b) How did 'Inglis' start to change over the centuries? (para. 4) (2)
7. The Norman conquest of England means the Normans did what? (1)
8. Name four languages Scots and English came from. (pars 3–6) (2)
9. a) 'Words of Dutch origin' (para. 5) Explain what this means in your own words. (1)
b) Give two Dutch and two French words and their meanings. (2)
10. a) Explain four of the five Latin abbreviations (para. 6) (4)
b) Explain why Latin was so important in the past. (2)
11. Give two other names for Lowland Scots. (para. 7) (2)
12. Para. 8 explains three historical events that had a harmful influence on the Scots language. Firstly say what these three were and then pick one of them and explain, as far as possible in your own words, how it affected Scots. (3 + 2)

TOTAL = 40

(B) Understanding, analysis and evaluation (more demanding)

MARKS

1. Explain the figure of speech used to describe the connection between the languages (first sentence) and show how it is continued in the second. (2)
2. Explain 'descendant from' and 'earlier inhabitants' in your own words. (2)
3. Which word tells us we can't be sure what language the Picts spoke? (1)
4. a) Which word in para. 2 tells us that Gaelic wasn't immediately spoken by everyone in Scotland?
b) Why are brackets used in paras 1 and 2? (2)
5. What is meant by 'common ancestors'? (para. 3) (2)
6. Identify two features of language or punctuation that help to cram a lot of information into the second sentence of para. 3 and show how they do this. (2)
7. Explain how the term 'Scots' could cause confusion. (para. 4) (2)
8. Explain 'dominant' language and how the context helps you to understand it. (2)
9. Show how the second sentence of para. 7 creates a contrasting effect. (2)
10. a) How does the opening sentence of para. 8 help to link the paragraphs? (2)
b) What is the purpose of the colon at the end of this sentence? (2)
11. Explain, as far as possible in your own words, how the status of Scots changed between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. (4)
12. a) Using your own words as far as possible, sum up the attitude of many Scots to their language and culture over the past three centuries. (para. 9). (4)
b) How is this shown via word choice and linkage? (4)
13. What do you think para. 9 shows about the attitudes of many Scottish teachers towards their children in the past? (2)

TOTAL = 35



STATUS AND RESPECT

It is important to realise that there was nothing inevitable about the decline of Scots and Gaelic, as if they somehow just became old-fashioned. Their loss of status was more to do with powerful political and economic changes (e.g. the Union of the Parliaments) and the fact that the Scottish upper classes wished to acquire the language of the royal court and fashionable London society. This meant that in time Gaelic or Scots were spoken only by the 'common' people who lacked influence or education, though their language and culture has survived centuries of prejudice, in spite of the power of the English language, the language of a great empire that spanned the globe and made English the dominant world language today.

“Listen tae the Teacher”, by Nancy Nicolson
(*The Kist* anthology, available from Education Scotland)

Discussion

What do you think of the advice given to the boy, i.e. to do in Rome as Romans do? What is he advised to do when he has grown up? Do you think this is good advice? Why? In the past Scottish children were often made to feel that their native languages were 'wrong' or inferior. What do you think of this attitude? Does this still sometimes happen? Should this be acceptable today? Is there still a feeling that Scots is 'bad' English or somehow not as proper? Who might express this sort of attitude? Why?

Discussion, individual talk and possible discursive essay

Option 1: Yet things have changed a lot in recent times and it is now the Scottish Government's policy to encourage Scots and Gaelic alongside English in Scottish schools, i.e. to value all the different languages or dialects in our culture. Do you think all our languages have equal status (social standing) or are given equal respect in Scotland today? Why or why not? What do you think of the policy of now encouraging Scots and Gaelic in schools as in A Curriculum for Excellence and the Scottish Studies Award. Look up Curriculum for Excellence Briefing Number 17 on the Scots Language in the Curriculum.

Option 2: Do you think it is right that we should be trying to keep Gaelic alive, e.g. through television and education? Gaelic education is now being encouraged, not only in the Gaelic speaking areas, but throughout Scotland. Do you think this is a good idea? Should all Scottish children learn at least something about Gaelic, alongside Scots and English? Why?

PART TWO: GAELIC – SCOTLAND’S OLDEST LIVING LANGUAGE

An introduction to Gaelic for non-Gaelic speaking children, suitable for upper primary or lower secondary though some of it would also be useful to students doing the Scottish Studies Certificate.

Introduction

This unit provides an introduction to Gaelic for children who do not come from a Gaelic speaking area and highlights how much Gaelic has left its mark on our landscape, culture, language and names more than we perhaps realise.

Gaelic (Gaelic spelling = ‘Gaidhlig’, pronounced gallic)

Though once spoken across most of Scotland, Gaelic has been in retreat for centuries, firstly due to the ruling classes in the Lowlands starting to see it as ‘barbaric’ and Scottish kings trying to break the power of Highland leaders, and secondly the destruction of clan society after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, followed by the Highland Clearances, economic decline and mass emigration.

Today Gaelic is widely used in everyday speech only in the crofting communities of the Western Isles and in a few other islands, especially Skye, though many people in the Lowlands also speak it and their number has been increasing due to Gaelic education classes and the setting up of Gaelic medium schools in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Yet millions of people throughout the world, whose ancestors migrated from Scotland, though not always voluntarily, are often very proud of their Scottish culture, holding Burns’s Suppers, Highland Games and wanting to trace their ancestors, etc. There are plenty of places throughout the world, especially in North America, Australia and New Zealand with Scottish or Gaelic place names and on Cape Breton in Nova Scotia (New Scotland) they are very proud of their Gaelic language and culture, especially their fiddlers and pipers.



Gaelic Place Names

While we can learn about our ancestors and their way of life from relics, objects buildings or historical sites or from the languages they used in old documents or texts, we can also learn a lot by studying the map and the landscape around us. As Gaelic is our oldest language and was here long before Scots or English, this explains why many of our names for landscape features and settlements, including our oldest towns and cities, are from Gaelic (but often Norse in the Northern Isles), though their sound and spelling has often been changed by Scots or English.

Here is a list of some common Gaelic place names. How many do you know the meaning of? See how many you can match up with the English meanings given below. To help you we have shown the number of letters and one or two of the letters in some words. Check your answers in a Gaelic dictionary or a place names dictionary. There are also several different words for the same thing, e.g. a field.

aber (Pictish) / inver = r _ _ _ _ m _ _ _ _	coire = m _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ w
abhainn (aving) = _ _ _ _ r	craobh (cruiv) = _ r _ _
achadh, ach, auch or dal = _ _ e _ _	creag / crag = _ _ _ g or _ _ _ ff
aird, ard = _ _ _ g _ _	druim = _ _ d _ _
allt = _ _ _ _ _	dum or dun = _ o _ _ or h _ _ _
baile / bal = _ _ w _	gleann / glen = v _ _ _ _ _
barr = r _ _ _ _	innis / inch / eilean = _ s _ _ _ _
bealach = m _ _ _ _ _ _ _ p _ _ _	lag, laggan = h _ _ _ _ w
beinn / ben, = _ _ u _ _ _ _ _	loch = _ _ _ _ _
blar / blair = c _ _ _ _ _ _ g (or field)	monadh = _ _ _ r
bun = _ _ _ t	poll / linne / lynn / lon = _ _ _ l
burn = _ _ _ _ _ _ _	rudha / rhu / ross = p _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
car/ caer = _ o _ _	or c _ _ _ _
carn / cairn = _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _	sgorr / sgurr = _ _ _ k (or sharp rock)
ceann / ken or kin = _ e _ _	sloc = _ _ t
cill / kil = _ _ _ _ _ _ _	srath / strath = _ _ _ _ _ y
clach = _ t _ _ _	taigh / tigh = _ _ _ s _
cnoc / knock = _ _ _ _ _	tir = _ _ _ d tobar / tober = _ _ _ l

English meanings: stream, water, river, river mouth or estuary, island, pool, pit or hole, waterfall, lake, land, head, headland or cape, height, peak, point or promontory, cliff, rock, pile of stones, valley, hollow, field, foot, fort, clearing or battlefield, mountain, mountain hollow, mountain pass, moor, hill, tree, well, church, house, town, village, fort or castle.

Some Common Gaelic Adjectives

aosda (pron. eusda) = old, (also *sean*)
ard = high
ban / bhan (van) = white or fair
beag / beg / bhig! (beck / vick) = small
caol / kyle = narrow, *cul* = back, behind (places / location)
dearg, *dheirg* (pron. jerug) = red
donn (pron. down) = brown
dorch (dawruchu) = dark
dubh / dhù (doo / goo) = black
fad, fhada (fat / ata) = long
fionn (feeun) = white

fuair (foour) = cold
garbh, gharbh, gairbhe (pron. garv) = rough
geal (pron. gyal) = white, clear, bright
gearr (pron. gyarr) = short
glas = grey or green
gorm (gurrum) = blue or green (landscape),
mor (e) / mhor (e) (more / vore) = big
og (awg) = young
or, oir (awr) = gold
ruadh / roy (ruagh / roy) = red (person)
sean, seana (pron. shen/a) = old
uaine (pron. oo-annyuh) = green.

Further Research

How many places can you think of with some of the above in their name? Using a map of Scotland, try to work out or guess the meanings of some of our well-known place names or check a map of your local area and draw a short list of place names you find interesting and try to find out what they mean. There are several good short place-name dictionaries available and you will also find some very helpful sources online, e.g. Scottish Words and Place Names (SWAP) or the **ASLS unit on Place Names** which is also on our website.

Place-name corruption

Try to find a good example of how a Gaelic word has become changed or corrupted into Scots or English and draw a poster or cartoon to illustrate the original meaning, e.g. Thundergay on Arran is from the Gaelic *torr a gaoithe* = hill, mound of the wind (i.e. windy hill), or from *ton a gaoith* = backside to the wind!

Local place-names, a case study

The North Ayrshire school of Garnock Academy takes its name from the river and valley in which it is situated. The name Garnock, as well as the three towns in the valley, are all from Gaelic, though there is some uncertainty about the exact meaning of some of them, something that is not uncommon with many of our place-names.

Garnock could be from *garbh* (pron = garv) or *caer / car* = a hill fort, while *nock* is from *cnoc* = a hill.

Beith is simply the Gaelic word for a birch tree, as it must have had a lot of birches at one time.

Kilbirnie could be named after an early Christian missionary or monk, possibly Brendan or Brennan or Birinus (cill = a small church or a monk's cell / shelter) or alternatively it could be Culburnie (as in Ross-shire), from Cùil Braonaigh = secluded spot of the damp place or damp nook, which certainly fits its location.

Dalry is not so clear as it has several possible meanings. It could be from *dail*, meaning a share or field or meadow, while *dal* could be a court. Courthill is a street at the top of the town and a court or moot hill may have been situated on this hilltop at one time. Or it could be from the Norse or old English word for a valley, a dale. Some have thought it is from *rioh* (ree) in Gaelic, meaning a king, (maybe it was the court of a king?) but it is much more likely to be from *righead* or *ruighe* (ree) meaning a slope, as the original hilltop settlement would have been surrounded by slopes, so it probably means the meadow/ fields on the slope. Some have suggested it could even be from *fhraoich* (rooch) meaning of the heather, all of which could have shortened over time to ree or rye, the name of a contributory burn (The Rye) to the River Garnock, though it is more likely just to refer to the rye that was grown along its banks.



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Investigate your own area

Check out your own local names in a place names dictionary or try looking them up online. Some parts of the country have quite detailed studies and even websites available. If there is more than one possible meaning for some of the places, say which you prefer and why. You will also find a useful list of common place name elements and some suggested activities for exploring your own area in the Teaching Note that accompanies the **ASLS Place Names unit**, referred to above.

Talk and / or informative writing

Research and prepare a short informative talk or report on interesting local or Scottish place names, explaining their meaning, origin and why think they are interesting or funny, e.g. via corruption of the original, e.g. the 'Ah'll awa noo' story for Alloway.

Art / writing

Try drawing or designing posters or even make up poetry cards to illustrate the meaning of your area's towns, villages, farms, and so on.

People's names in Gaelic

Many Scots have family or surnames that are from Gaelic, as do many people with Scottish ancestors throughout the world. If you are a Mac, it means you are the son of someone, as in MacDonald, the son of Donald, and if you have Nic as part of your family name, it means you are named after someone's daughter, though it is sometimes combined with Mac as in MacNicol or Nicolson.

Many family names also come from place names, occupations or even physical features and some of these can be quite surprising and amusing, e.g. Campbell = twisted mouth, Cameron = twisted nose, Gilchrist = servant of Christ, Gillies = servant of Jesus, MacBeth = son of life, MacLean = son of Iain or John, MacPherson = son of the parson, MacIntyre = son of the carpenter, MacTaggart = son of the priest!

Many popular first names are from Gaelic, like Aileen, Catriona, Eilidh, Fiona, Kirsten, Mairi, Morag, Sheena or Shona, or Alasdair, Angus, Calum, Campbell, Donald, Dugald, Duncan, Ewan, Fergus, Finlay, Greg or Gregor, Iain, Neil and many more. Try to find out the English version of some of the above or other Gaelic names, e.g. Iain is Gaelic for John, Sheena = Jean and Shona = Janet.

Informative report / writing / drawing

All names mean something. Do you know the meaning of your own name or your family name? If you find out, draw a cartoon or write a poem to illustrate the meaning. Explain who or where it comes from, why you think you were called this and what it means.

Look up a surnames dictionary and / or check the first / Christian names in a good dictionary and you will find explanations for many of the names in your class. How many are from Gaelic, Scots, English or other languages?

Prepare a short report on the names in your group, for reporting back to other groups or the rest of the class, possibly adding a few comments about what it tells you about your background and history or maybe how well you think the name suits the person.

Loan words (see also *Listen tae the Teacher sheets*)

Although Gaelic is very different from Scots and English, there are many words which have been 'loaned' or borrowed by one language from the other, including many words from Gaelic that have been used in Scots for a long time and some vice versa. Here are some examples, with the part of speech sometimes given to avoid confusion. See if you can supply the English meaning in each case. Maybe the Scots dictionary might help also.

Gaelic	Scots	English
buntata	tattie	_____ (noun)
braigh	brae	_____
briogais	breeks	_____
bodach	auld buddie	_____
clabar	clabber / glabber	_____
clann	clan	_____
clud / cluidan	clout	_____ (noun or verb)
driog	dreep	_____
druchd / druchadh	drookit	_____ (adjective)
dunt	dunt	_____ (noun or verb)
flur	floer	_____ (noun)
gearain	girn	_____ (verb)
giog (pron =geeg)	keek	_____
gliogach / gliogaid	glaikit	_____ (adjective)
gob	gab, gob, gub	_____ (noun)
paigh	pey	_____ (noun or verb)
pluc	plook	_____ (noun)
poc	poke	_____
preas / preasa	press	_____
saighdear	sodger	_____
sgreuch	skreich / screch	_____ (noun or verb)
sluig	slug	_____ (verb)
snotraich	snottery	_____ (adjective)
stot	stot / stote	_____ (verb)
stur	stoor	_____ (noun)
sugh	sook	_____ (verb)
tiota	totie / toatie	_____ (adjective)
trang	thrang	_____
uist / eist	wheesht	_____ (verb)

There are also some Gaelic words that have entered the English language and are widely used, such as the landscape words above, like ben, glen, strath, bog, cairn, crag, as well as words like brogues, ceilidh, clan, claymore, pillion, quaich, sporran, to 'twig' something (from *tuig* = to understand) and not forgetting *uisge-beatha* (ooshkyu beah) which became whisky or *sluagh*-ghairm which became slogan or gu leor / galore = plenty, as in *Whisky Galore*, the title of a famous novel and film.

Finding out more about Gaelic

Copies of the CD *Why Gaelic?* are available from Canan, Isle of Skye or www.colmcille.net. After the introduction, go to the menu and click on Scots Gaelic and it will give you various options, including history, education or language including learning some words from the Gaelic Taster. Here are a few examples, including a few expressions that are commonly used in Scots. A rough pronunciation guide is included in brackets.

Writing

Reading the examples below and look up some more in *Why Gaelic?*

In pairs or groups, script a short conversation in Gaelic, with a translation, then try reading it to others or even try recording it. Alternatively, prepare a short report on one or two of the topics from *Why Gaelic?* Also provide a short guide to some of the Gaelic words you have learned from it, with an explanation of how they are said.

Some common Gaelic words and expressions

Failte (falchi) = welcome

Ciamar a tha thu / sibh? (kimmer a ha oo / shiv)
= How are you? (singular / plural)

De tha dol? (jay ha dol) = What's doing? How are things?

Tha gu math (ha gu ma) = fine / well

Gle mhath (glay va) = very well / good

Ceart gu leor (kearsht gulyore) = okay / alright / right enough

Chan eil dona (hanyale dona) = not bad

Ma 's e ur toil e (mash eh oor tawl eh) = please (literally = if it pleases you)

Seadh (sheug) = uh-huh / sure / yes indeed;

seadh dìreach (jeerach) = just so

Tapadh leat / leibh (tappah let / layve) = thank you (singular / plural)

Moran taing (moran tang) = many thanks

'S e ur beatha (sheh ur beha) = you're welcome

Tha mi duilich (ha me doolich) = I'm sorry

'S mise Fiona (is mishì Fiona) = I am Fiona / I'm called . . .

Madainn mhath (matting va) = good morning

Feasgar math (fayshkar ma) = good afternoon / evening

Oidhche mhath (oyechi va) = good night

Tìoraidh (cheeri) = cheerio, bye

Mar sin leat / leibh (marshin let / leeve)
= goodbye (singular / plural)

Slan leat / leibh (slan let / leeve) = goodbye, farewell

Slainte / Slainte mhath (slahn-chuh va) = health, good health, cheers

Tha / Chan 'eil (ha / chan yale) = yes / no (i.e. is / is not or are / are not)

De tha thu 'g iarraidh? (jay ha oo geeury) = what do you want?

Tha mi 'g iarraidh (ha mi geeury) = I want ...

'S math sin (smashin) = that's good / great

Tha sin gle mhath gu dearbh (ha shin glae va goo jaruv) = that's very good indeed

'S maiseach (smashach) = it's handsome, beautiful, lovely

Snog (snok) = pleasant / nice, *gle shmog* (glay nok) = very pleasant / nice

Sgoinneil (skunyale) = great, brilliant

Breagha (breeah) = beautiful

Granda (grantah) = horrible, ugly

Poster or cartoon competition

In pairs or groups, make up a poster or cartoon to illustrate some of your favourite Gaelic words or expressions or to show why you think learning Gaelic is important, interesting or fun or to encourage others to learn Gaelic.

Gaelic Courses

There are conversation groups and classes run by some local authorities, community groups, universities, including distance learning courses or short courses from the Gaelic College Sabhal Mor Ostaig, or organisations such as Clì Gàidhlig and Ùlpan.

Internet

There is also plenty of free online learning material available, such as Beag air Bheag from BBC Alba, Bruìdhinn ar Canan, Foram na Gàidhlig, Learn Scots Gaelic, or Learngaelic.net which provides a lot of useful information on learning Gaelic as well as the resources and opportunities that are available.