

Successful exam teaching

How are exam classes different from general English classes?

- Students may feel under pressure to succeed. This pressure could come from parents, teachers or from themselves.
- The course is fixed, with a syllabus that must be completed. The teacher may feel that they don't have time to do activities that are not in the Students' Book or in exam-task format.
- Students may not be interested in learning English for its own sake –
 they may just want to pass the exam. This can lead to students who are
 motivated to do exam practice, but may not see the value of
 communicative activities.
- Exam classes often place more emphasis on reading, writing and grammar than general courses, which often include more speaking and listening.
- Teachers can have problems if their students are weak and not at the level of the exam – students can become demotivated, and the teacher can feel frustrated.

A1 What do exam teachers need to know at the start of a course?

- 1 The format and content of the exam
 - How long is the exam?
 - How many different parts are there to the exam?
 - What skills are tested in each part?
 - What is the grammar syllabus for the exam?
 - How are the skills tested multiple-choice questions, gap fill, etc.?
- 2 The practicalities of test-taking
 - How much time is allowed for each part of the exam?
 - Where do students write their answers? Is there transfer time?
 - How many marks are there for each question?
 - When and where will the exam take place?
- 3 Marking the exam
 - How is the exam marked?
 - What is the weighting of the different papers?
 - What are the assessment criteria for each part, especially writing and speaking?
- 4 After the exam
 - How are the results presented?
 - What can your students do with the qualification?
 - What is the next exam that your students should progress to?

Use the checklist on Worksheet A1 at the start of the course to help you to plan your work. You could include comments about past experience, possible areas of difficulty, the coursebook you are using, etc.

Worksheet A1: Before the course starts

1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	
	2 3 4 5 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

A2 How to be a successful exam teacher

1 A good exam teacher should balance teaching and testing.

Students enrolled on an exam course will expect to do a lot of practice tests and exam practice. However, if this is all you do, you will produce excellent test-takers, but poor language users! When time is restricted, you need to make the most of the time you are teaching, and the time you need to be testing.

Who should you test, and when?

The struggling class

Here the priority is teaching. Students may lack not only test-taking skills, but also language knowledge, so you need to identify their needs and try to fill in the gaps. Testing too often might demotivate them, although you may want to set progress tests for your own assessment of what they need to study. Make sure that they have realistic aims and expectations.

The average class (often with mixed abilities)

Students have the basic test-taking and language skills, but they need to consolidate and review these skills as well as extend their range of structures and language. Regular testing can give these students a sense of progress, and showing them what is involved in the exam early in the course can motivate and focus them.

The strong class

Here the emphasis is on students getting the best marks they can. Their language and test-taking skills should be good, and the problem may be to keep them motivated. Challenge them by setting them tasks above the level, and involve them in understanding what they can do to get a higher than average mark in the exam. They should be aiming high, and not settling for 'good enough'.

2 Teachers should also prepare students for the practicalities of taking the exam.

Students need to know exactly how to prepare themselves for the exam, whether they are weak or strong students.

3 Take a moment to think of your own ideas of what other qualities a good exam teacher should have, and write them down. Then compare them with the list below.

A successful exam teacher:

- believes that the exam is useful and important.
- enjoys teaching towards a goal.
- can manage their own and their students' time effectively.
- knows and understands the exam, including the testing focus of each part.
- listens to their students' concerns and worries.
- gives honest and direct feedback on students' performance.
- motivates students and fosters independent learning.

As you go through the course, use the checklist on Worksheet A2 to note down ideas that have worked or have not worked. You can use this for planning future exam courses.

Worksheet A2: How to be a successful exams teacher

Aim	Activities	Advantages	Disadvantages	Conclusions
Helping students see the value of the exam				
Helping students manage their time				
Helping students understand the testing focus of each part				
Giving students the chance to talk about their feelings				
Giving feedback in different ways				
Keeping students motivated				
Developing independent learning				

A3-A6 Taking exams

Aim:

• To prepare students for the practical aspects of taking exams

Timing:

10-15 minutes

- You could do any or all of Worksheets A3–A6 at the start of the course, to get students mentally prepared. Ask them to keep their worksheets so that you can refer to them during the course. Then do them again as a test about a week before taking the exam, or use Worksheet A7.
- You could also leave any or all of the worksheets until the end of the course and do them as a refresher before the exam.

Rationale:

• If students are totally comfortable with the practicalities of the exam, they will only need to think about the language they need.

A3 Taking a speaking exam Procedure:

- Put students into pairs (A and B). Give out the appropriate worksheets.
- Give them a couple of minutes to read through their sentences by themselves to see if they can predict the missing information in their sentences. Tell them not to show each other their sentences.
- Then ask them to work in pairs and dictate the information to each other.
- They can then check their answers.

When you do it at the end of the course:

- Ask students to write down as many tips as they can remember.
- Then give out the worksheet and follow the same procedure as above.
- Ask them to compare their completed worksheets with the tips they wrote down. Then tell them to learn the ones they forgot!

A4 Taking a writing exam Procedure:

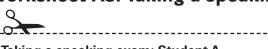
- You could do this as a whole-class activity.
- Give out all the worksheets, one to each student. Don't tell them who has which worksheet.
- Give them a couple of minutes to read through their sentences by themselves to see if they can predict the missing information in their sentences. Tell them not to show each other their sentences.
- Ask them to stand up and move around until they find someone who has the
 other worksheet for their paper. They should then work with that person to
 complete their worksheets and discuss the answers. Tell them not to show each
 other their sentences.
- When they have all completed their worksheets, ask them to get into groups of four and discuss the two best tips.

A5 Taking a reading exam Procedure:

- Put students into pairs (A and B). Give each student the appropriate worksheet.
- Ask them to read it through, then to discuss the information with their partner.
 There are four differences in the information they have to find the differences, then discuss which one is correct.
- Discuss the answers with the whole class.

KEY: Where there are differences, the correct sentences are: 1B 3A 6B 7A

Worksheet A3: Taking a speaking exam



Taking a speaking exam: Student A

- 1 Arrive don't be late so that you go into the exam room stressed.
- **2** Find someone to talk to in English
- **3** When you go into the room, say and take time to make yourself comfortable.
- 4 Listen carefully to the instructions and don't be afraid to ask if you have not understood. Say I'm sorry, could you say that again, please?

- **5** If you are taking the exam with a partner, don't the conversation.
- **6** Give interesting answers, with don't just say *Yes* or *No*.
- **7** Try to use a range of structures and
- 8 Smile! Enjoy the exam it is your chance to shine and If you enjoy it, you will do better.



Taking a speaking exam: Student B

- **1** Arrive in good time don't be late
- **2** Find just before you go into the exam room.
- **3** When you go into the room, say *Hello* to the examiner and
- 4 Listen carefully to the instructions and don't be afraid to ask the examiner to repeat the question if you have not understood. Say, please?
- **5** If you are taking the exam, don't monopolise the conversation.
- **6** Give interesting answers, with enough detail don't
- 7 Try to use a range of and vocabulary.
- 8 Smile! Enjoy the exam it is your chance to shine and do well. If you enjoy it, you will

Worksheet A4: Taking a writing exam

Та	king a writing exam: Student A
1	Bring a spare and pen, and a Check whether you are allowed to use a highlighter pen or not.
2	Make sure that you can see a clock, or with you. Make a note of when the exam will end so that you can plan your time.
3	Look through before you start to write anything.
4	If you have a choice of questions, before you choose. Make a short plan before you to make sure that you have enough to say.

Taking a writing exam: Student B

- 1 Bring a spare pencil and pen, and a rubber. Check whether you are allowed to use or not.
- 2 Make sure that you can see a clock, or that you have a watch with you. Make a note of when so that you can plan your time.
- **3** Look through the whole exam paper before anything.
- 4 If you have a choice of questions, think carefully before you choose. Make a before you start to write to make sure that you have



Taking a writing exam: Student C

- 1 Read carefully. Many exams provide a context for each question, e.g. FCE make sure you read this carefully.
- 2 Divide your time sensibly between so that you don't time.
- 3 Always keep to of the question don't write things that are irrelevant.
- **5** Write clearly if you make a mistake, correct it



Taking a writing exam: Student D

- 1 Read all the instructions carefully. Many exams provide for each question, e.g. FCE make sure you read this carefully.
- 2 Divide sensibly between all the questions so that run out of time.
- 3 Always keep to the point of the question don't write things that are
- 4 Leave before the end to check your work for grammar and mistakes.
- **5** Write if you make a mistake, correct it tidily.

Worksheet A5: Taking a reading exam



Taking a reading exam: Student A

- 1 Look through the whole paper for a long time before you start.
- 2 Make sure that you can see a clock, or that you have a watch with you. Make a note of when the exam will end so that you can plan your time.
- 3 Read the instructions for each part carefully, even if you think you know what to do. Sometimes the instructions give you information about the type of text you will read.
- 4 If there is an example, read it first.
- 5 Don't panic if there are words you don't understand. You may not need them for the task.
- 6 If you are allowed to use a dictionary, use it for every word you don't understand.
- 7 If you are not sure of an answer, go on to the next. You can always go back at the end. Don't waste time.
- 8 Leave time at the end to go back and check any answers you are not sure of.



Taking a reading exam: Student B

- 1 Look through the whole paper briefly before you start.
- 2 Make sure that you can see a clock, or that you have a watch with you. Make a note of when the exam will end so that you can plan your time.
- 3 Read the instructions for each part carefully, even if you think you know what to do. Sometimes the instructions give you information about the person who wrote the text.
- 4 If there is an example, read it first.
- 5 Don't panic if there are words you don't understand. You may not need them for the task.
- 6 If you are allowed to use a dictionary, don't use it too much as this will use up a lot of time. Only use it if you really need to.
- 7 If you are not sure of an answer, always try to find it and don't go back at the end. Don't waste time.
- 8 Leave time at the end to go back and check any answers you are not sure of.

A6 Taking a listening exam

Running dictation:

This activity also helps students with their reading and writing skills.

Procedure:

- Put students into groups of three. One student will write, one will dictate and one will check.
- Make a copy of the worksheet for each group and put them on the wall in several different places.
- Assign each group a text on the wall. Tell students that when you say Go!, the person who is dictating should run to their text, read as much as they can, and run back to their writer and dictate what they can remember. They should then run back to their text for the next part.
- The checker should make sure that spelling, etc. is correct.
- The teacher should shout Change! every two or three minutes and the writer and dictator should change places.
- When the text is complete, all three members of the group should check it for accuracy. The winner is the group that completes the whole text first, correctly.
- Ask students to read the text through again to pick out the main ideas.
- Make a note of the tips on the board and discuss them with the whole class.



Worksheet A6: Taking a listening exam



Taking a listening exam: Running dictation text

- **1** Bring a spare pencil and pen, and a rubber.
- 2 Make sure you are sitting comfortably, and that you can hear the recording easily.
- 3 Relax! You usually have time to read the questions through before you listen. Make sure you do this.
- 4 Read the instructions because they may give you information about what you will hear.
- 5 Try to predict vocabulary. For example, if you are going to listen to people talking about shopping, then you know you will hear words like buy and customer.
- 6 If you miss the answer to a question, don't panic. Just go on to the next one. You will usually have the chance to listen again.
- 7 If you have to write an answer, check your spelling, and if you are doing multiple choice, don't choose more than one option!
- 8 Finally, if you have to transfer your answers to a different answer sheet, do it carefully. Don't make silly mistakes!

A7 Tips for taking exams

Procedure:

- At the end of the course, write the four 'Tips for taking exams' headings on the board.
- Put students into pairs. Ask them to write down as many tips for taking exams as they can remember, under the four headings.
- Give out the checklist and let them compare.
- Discuss which tips they think are most important.



Worksheet A7: Tips for taking exams



Taking a speaking exam

- 1 Arrive in good time don't be late so that you go into the exam room stressed.
- **2** Find someone to talk to in English just before you go into the exam room.
- **3** When you go into the room, say *Hello* to the examiner and take time to make yourself comfortable.
- 4 Listen carefully to the instructions and don't be afraid to ask the examiner to repeat the question if you have not understood. Say I'm sorry, could you say that again, please?
- **5** If you are taking the exam with a partner, don't monopolise the conversation.
- **6** Give interesting answers, with enough detail don't just say *Yes* or *No*.
- **7** Try to use a range of structures and vocabulary.
- 8 Smile! Enjoy the exam it is your chance to shine and do well. If you enjoy it, you will do better.



Taking a writing exam

- 1 Bring a spare pencil and pen, and a rubber. Check whether you are allowed to use a highlighter pen or not.
- 2 Make sure that you can see a clock, or that you have a watch with you. Make a note of when the exam will end so that you can plan your time.
- **3** Look through the whole exam paper before you start to write anything.
- 4 If you have a choice of questions, think carefully before you choose. Make a short plan before you start to write to make sure that you have enough to say.
- 5 Read all the instructions carefully. Many exams provide a context for each question, e.g. FCE make sure you read this carefully.
- 6 Divide your time sensibly between all the questions so that you don't run out of time.
- 7 Always keep to the point of the question don't write things that are irrelevant.
- 8 Leave time at the end to check your work for grammar and spelling mistakes.
- **9** Write clearly if you make a mistake, correct it tidily.



Taking a reading exam

- 1 Look through the whole paper briefly before you start.
- 2 Make sure that you can see a clock, or that you have a watch with you. Make a note of when the exam will end so that you can plan your time.
- 3 Read the instructions for each part carefully, even if you think you know what to do. Sometimes the instructions give you information about the type of text you will read.
- 4 If there is an example, read it first.
- 5 Don't panic if there are words you don't understand. You may not need them for the task.
- 6 If you are allowed to use a dictionary, don't use it too much as this will use up a lot of time. Only use it if you really need to.
- 7 If you are not sure of an answer, go on to the next. You can always go back at the end. Don't waste time.
- 8 Leave time at the end to go back and check any answers you are not sure of.



Taking a listening exam

- **1** Bring a spare pencil and pen, and a rubber.
- 2 Make sure you are sitting comfortably, and that you can hear the recording easily.
- 3 Relax! If you are tense and nervous, you are more likely to miss information when you listen.
- 4 In most listening exams, you will have time to read the questions through before you listen. Make sure you do this.
- 5 Read all the instructions as they may give you some information about what you will hear that can help you.
- 6 Try to predict the vocabulary you might hear, e.g. if the instructions say you are going to listen to people talking about shopping, then you know you will hear words like buy, customer, etc.
- 7 If you miss the answer to a question, don't panic. Just leave it and go on to the next one. In most exams you will have the chance to listen again.
- 8 If you have to write an answer, check your spelling.
- **9** If you are doing multiple choice, don't mark more than one answer!
- 10 If you have extra time to transfer your answers to an answer sheet at the end of the exam, do this carefully. Don't make silly mistakes!



Problems and solutions

Teachers often find it helpful to discuss issues together. By concentrating on problems specific to exam classes and finding solutions, teachers can ensure that both they and their students are more confident and prepared for the exam.

B1 Problems and solutions 1

Aim:

To get teachers sharing problems and discussing solutions

Timing:

30 minutes

Rationale:

 These are all problems that teachers with exam classes share. By focussing on them and giving teachers a chance to discuss them, some solutions can be found.

Procedure:

- The worksheet can be used as a discussion document in a teachers' meeting or a staff training session.
- Ask teachers to discuss the statements together and suggest solutions to those they agree with by filling in the boxes.
- Ask them to find relevant activities in the Activate! Exam Box to fit the problem.

SUGGESTED KEY:

My students get discouraged when they don't do well in a test.

- Don't do tests at the true level of the exam at the start of the course. Build up to the level gradually. It is tempting to start exam practice early, using sample papers, and to do mock tests, but they can be very demotivating, especially for weaker students.
- Do plenty of work on understanding the exam tasks and what they are testing, and on exam strategy before you ask them to do a practice exam.

Activate! Exam Box activity: Teaching FCE; Teaching teenagers, C5

My students just want to do exam practice.

- Balance teaching and testing.
- Use non-exam texts on topics you know your students will be interested in, and do activities other than exam tasks, but make sure you explain how everything you do is relevant to the exam.

Activate! Exam Box activity: Teaching teenagers, D1

My students can't see how the exam relates to the real world.

- Most exams now are linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which has 'can do' statements relating to the real world. Connect these statements to the activities you do in class.
- Make sure that students understand what skills they are using in class so that they can relate them to the real world.

Activate! Exam Box activity: Teaching teenagers, C6

My students don't want to learn English – they just want to pass the exam.

- Try to choose texts and topics that will interest them. Link them to DVDs that they might choose to watch themselves.
- Point out that they may want to travel and that English is useful. Also remind them that in the global workplace, it will get them a better job.

Activate! Exam Box activity: Teaching teenagers, A6

My students want me to correct every mistake in their writing, but if I do, they get discouraged.

- Use a marking scheme with them. Explain that you will not necessarily
 mark for the same thing every time sometimes you may concentrate on
 grammar, but other times you may concentrate on vocabulary or style and
 register.
- Encourage them to do peer correction and to edit their own work. **Activate!** Exam Box activity: Teaching exam skills, B4; Teaching teenagers, C3

My students want me to tell them everything – they rely on me too much.

- Discuss different approaches to reading, listening, and so on.
- Encourage them to think about how they learn as individuals, and to adapt their study plan to take their own learning style into account.
- Help them to use a dictionary and grammar reference book themselves. Set homework on this occasionally. (See Section D, Worksheets D1 and D5.)
- Encourage them to develop their own ways of recording vocabulary, grammar rules, etc. Make sure that you check with them regularly that they are doing this you can do it quietly while they are doing group work. (See Section D, Worksheets D2, D3 and D4.)

Activate! Exam Box activity: Teaching exam skills, C3

My students find the pressure of the exam difficult to deal with.

- If they feel well-prepared, they will be less nervous. Make sure that they know exactly what to expect how to fill in the answer sheets, how to manage their time. There should be no nasty surprises in an exam!
- Encourage them to talk about how they feel so that you can reassure them. **Activate!** Exam Box activity: Teaching teenagers, C1

I find it hard to teach communicatively when students just want to do exam practice.

• Language is for communication! Make sure that they see the relevance of what you are doing in the classroom, and make it fun. If they enjoy the lessons, and can see how the work relates to exam skills, then they will want to do communicative activities.

Activate! Exam Box activity: Teaching teenagers, C4

Worksheet B1: Problems and solutions 1

Problem	Agree	Disagree	Solution(s)	Activate! Exam Box activity
My students get discouraged when they don't do well in a test.				
My students just want to do exam practice.				
My students can't see how the exam relates to the real world.				
My students don't want to learn English – they just want to pass the exam.				
My students want me to correct every mistake in their writing, but if I do, they get discouraged.				
My students want me to tell them everything – they rely on me too much.				
My students find the pressure of the exam difficult to deal with.				
I find it hard to teach communicatively when students just want to do exam practice.				

B2 Problems and solutions 2

Aim:

To help teachers find solutions to problems with exam classes

Timing:

20 minutes

Rationale:

• To provide support for teachers and to suggest practical solutions to problems that they might not find elsewhere.

Procedure:

- In a staff meeting or a staff training session, give teachers Worksheet B2.
- Ask them to match the problems and solutions.
- Give them ten minutes to work with a colleague. Then take feedback and discuss.

KEY:

- My students only measure progress by test results. = Solution A
- Exam practice is boring! = Solution D
- I don't understand how to mark my students' work according to exam criteria. = Solution B
- My students get bored they are interested at the start of the course, but then they become less motivated. = Solution C
- I don't have time to do extra activities because I have to cover the exam syllabus. = Solution E
- My students get nervous the day before the exam. = Solution G
- My students don't practise English enough outside the classroom.
 Solution F

Worksheet B2: Problems and solutions 2 – problems

Problem	Solution
My students only measure progress by test results.	
Exam practice is boring!	
I don't understand how to mark my students' work according to exam criteria.	
My students get bored – they are interested at the start of the course, but then they become less motivated.	
I don't have time to do extra activities because I have to cover the exam syllabus.	
My students get nervous the day before the exam.	
My students don't practise English enough outside the classroom.	

Worksheet B2: Problems and solutions 2 – solutions

If you develop some sense of independent learning, students will be more able to measure their own progress.

Make sure that you have the most up-to-date handbook on the exam, and try to find out as much as possible from the exam board. For example, Cambridge ESOL have a useful website which gives you detailed information on the exams, as well as downloadable classroom activities and tips on exam technique. There are sample scripts with grades and notes from examiners, and you can download a report on each exam, giving tips, do's and don'ts and information about tasks that students world-wide found easy or difficult. Go to www.cambridgeESOL.org.uk.

- Vary the activities you do during the course.
- Show how everything you do is relevant to students' needs.
- Don't start exam practice too early.

Identify the skills you want to teach, e.g. listening for specific information. Show students how it is tested in the exam. Then use something more interesting to test the same skills, e.g. a song.

Ε

Exams test real-life skills as set out in the CEFR. By using real-life texts and doing activities in English that your students would do in their own language, you are demonstrating the relevance of the classroom to the exam, and of the exam to the real world.

Encourage them to set aside time when they speak to each other in English, e.g. the mid-morning break every Tuesday. It may feel strange, but it's worth it! Of course, your classroom is an English-only zone!

G

- At the start of the course, put students into groups. Get each group to come up with five tips for approaching an exam that they think are important. Give the groups time to share their ideas with the class, then get the class to agree on the ten most important tips. Write these up and display them on the wall.
- Leave the tips on display during the course. Students can then add or amend the list as the course goes on.
- An alternative or additional activity can be done a few days before the exam. Discuss the question below with your students. A friend of yours is taking an exam soon. What advice would you give them now?
- Then encourage them to take their own advice.

B3 Reading more

Aims:

- To help teachers encourage students to read more outside the classroom
- To find out from students what they would like to read, and how, during the course

Timing:

10 minutes

Rationale:

 Students often don't read much nowadays, and this limits their vocabulary and understanding of different written styles. This activity can be done with students to help them think about what they read and what they do and don't enjoy.

Procedure:

- Give out Worksheet B3.
- Ask students to discuss the ideas they like for reading, and to think about whether the idea would help them to read more. They can give each idea a mark out of ten for how useful they think it would be in making them read more.
- Then try to choose three that the whole class would do.

Suggestions for teachers:

- If the exam you are preparing them for has an optional set text (such as FCE), why not prepare them for it? It gives you something to discuss with them, is a rich source of vocabulary and gets them reading! It is a great option, and there may also be a film of the book that will motivate them even more.
- There is a great selection of graded readers in the Penguin Readers catalogue.
 See their website: www.penguinreaders.com. Here are some suggestions for exploiting them:
 - Have a selection of readers in the classroom that students can borrow.
 - Set homework regularly where the students choose a book, read it and write a review of it with recommendations for the others in the class. These reviews could be displayed on the walls, or kept in a class file for reference.
 - Give small groups of students their own 'reading week' once a term a
 different week for each group. In that week they should read as many readers
 as they can, and write a short synopsis of each one. The group that reads the
 greatest number of books in their week (and produces accurate synopses!)
 gets a small prize at the end of the semester.
- Read aloud to students if there is a good story! Alternatively, use talking books to stimulate them. Listening to a good story can be very motivating.

Worksheet B3: Reading more

Idea	I like it because	I don't like it because	Mark out of 10
Have a class library. We all choose one book and write a review for others in the class. We put our reviews on the wall.			
The class has one 'reading week' each semester. We have to read as many books as we can and write a summary of the story.			
We bring in a magazine article that was interesting in our own language, and tell the class about it in English.			
We find an article or story on the Internet in English, and bring it in for the class to talk about.			
We read the set book together and talk about it. We watch the film as well, if there is one.			

B4 Marking symbols

Aims:

- To introduce students to the idea of self-correction using marking symbols
- To practise editing
- To motivate and help students identify their own mistakes

Timing:

20 minutes

Rationale:

Students need to develop study skills and become independent learners. This
activity encourages them to edit their own work. Although the teacher is
indicating where the mistake is and what kind of mistake it is, the student has
to understand and correct it.

Procedure:

- Explain that you are going to show them how you are going to mark their written work. Ask them to read the paragraph, which has mistakes that have been marked using symbols.
- Put students into pairs. Ask them to correct the mistakes.
- Discuss their answers with the whole class.
- Ask them to complete the meaning of the symbols.
- Discuss the advantages of using this approach to their writing with the whole class. Encourage them to help each other, and to use reference books if they are not sure how to correct the mistake. Of course, they can ask you too!

KEY:

1

Dear Mr Jackson,

Do you still remember me, your old student? How are you now? I hope you are getting better quickly. I'm fine, and so are all your students. They are all asking **about** your health.

Last week, a new teacher came to our class. **His** name is Thompson and he **is 40 years old**. He comes from Scotland, and he looks **serious** all through the lesson, but **actually** he is a good teacher. He can explain the grammar clearly and give good **examples** so that **we can all understand easily**. Yesterday I went to have coffee with him in **a** café and was able to see the **difference** between his personality in and out of class. **W**hen he is relaxed, he is good company and he has an excellent sense of humour.

Finally, I must apologise because I **haven't visited** you yet, but I promise I will do my best to come as soon as possible.

Please get better soon. We are all thinking of you.

With best wishes,

Carlo

2 Symbols

T = tense Gr = grammar V = vocabulary St = style Sp = spelling WO = word order WF = word formation P = punctuation

Worksheet B4: Marking symbols

Dear Mr Jackson,

 $^{ extstyle e$ getting better quickly. I'm fine, and so are all your students. They are all asking for your health.

Last week, a new teacher came to our class ${}^{P}_{\Lambda}$ his name is Thompson and he ${}^{Gr}_{\Lambda}$ has 40 years. He comes from Scotland, and he looks $^{NF}_{\Lambda}$ seriously all through the lesson, but $^{WF}_{\Lambda}$ actuality he is a good teacher. He can explain the grammar clearly and give good $^{V}_{\Lambda}$ samples so that $^{WO}_{\Lambda}$ we easily can all understand. Yesterday I went to have coffee with him in $^{Gr}_{\Lambda}$ café and was able to see the $^{Sp}_{\Lambda}$ diffrense between his personality in and out of class. \int_{Λ}^{Λ} when he is relaxed, he is good company and he has an excellent sense of humour.

Finally, I must apologise because I $\frac{1}{h}$ didn't visit you yet, but I promise I will do my best to come as soon as possible.

Please get better soon. We \int_{Λ}^{T} all think of you.

2 Symbols

Τ	=	
Gr	=	
V	=	
St	=	
Sp	=	
WO	=	
WF	=	
Р	=	

B5 Do or don't?

Aims:

- To reassure students who get nervous just before an exam
- To remind students of the best way to prepare for an exam

Timing:

10 minutes

Rationale:

If students are very clear about how to prepare, they will be more confident and will do better.

Procedure:

- Put students into pairs. Ask them to complete the worksheet.
- Discuss their ideas with the whole class.
- Write the best ideas on the board so that all the students can benefit from them.

KEY:

- **1** Do arrive in the exam room in good time.
- **2** Don't sit up late revising the night before.
- 3 Do eat a good meal on the day of the exam.
- **4** Do set out everything you will need the night before, such as a rubber.
- **5** Do sharpen all your pencils.
- **6** Don't forget to check the timing of the exam papers.



Worksheet B5: Do or don't?

1	Write Do or Don't for each of the statements below.
	1 arrive in the exam room in good time.
	2 sit up late revising the night before.
	3 eat a good meal on the day of the exam.
	4 set out everything you will need the night before, such as a rubber.
	5 sharpen all your pencils.
	6 forget to check the timing of the exam papers.
2	Complete the sentences below with your own ideas.
	1 The most important thing to do the night before the exam is:
	2 The most important thing not to do the night before the exam is:
3	Compare your ideas with the rest of the class. Vote on the three most

important tips.

B6 How I feel about exams

Aims:

- To get students thinking about the value of taking exams
- To motivate and encourage students who might feel negative about the exam

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

• Students will study better if they understand the usefulness of the exam.

Procedure:

- Put students into pairs. Ask them to complete the first half of the worksheet (A), which puts forward the positive side of taking exams.
- Give them five minutes to discuss with a partner and to add any comments.
- Now ask them to complete the second part of the worksheet (B). Encourage them to put positive comments with concrete suggestions for overcoming any negative feelings.
- Ask them if they have any other positive or negative feelings about studying for the exam. If they have negative feelings, help them to think of solutions to the problems!

KEY:

Part A: Suggestions for comments

- 1 It makes it easier for me to plan work/can organise homework better.
- 2 I work better when there is some pressure on me, otherwise why bother?
- **3** I wouldn't bother to try to learn vocabulary, etc. without a test.
- **4** My parents don't really understand what I do in class, but they understand a test result.
- **5** It's useful for me to compare, but I mustn't get depressed either!
- **6** Very important.
- 7 Very important.

Part B: Suggestions for solutions

- 1 If you understand the skills you are using, it becomes more interesting and relevant to real life. You can feel that you are working in a discipline which is useful for real life.
- 2 If you know exactly what you are doing, revise and study hard, then there is no need to feel nervous.
- **3** Planning can overcome this make a good study plan and do work before going out to meet friends!
- **4** Grammar is the foundation of language. Don't try to learn the whole grammar book take each part in turn and make sure you understand it. Do practice exercises of grammar you find hard. Ask the teacher if you don't understand.
- **5** Keep records of new words (see Worksheet D2). Try to develop skills such as guessing the meaning of words from context. Try to learn five new words each lesson, and use them in writing or speaking. Look up any words you don't understand in a good dictionary such as the *Longman Exams Dictionary*.
- **6** Do timed practice. Pace yourself. Don't panic! If you can't do something, leave it and go on don't waste time on it.
- 7 Don't be afraid be confident. If you do the work and plan your time, you will pass!

Worksheet B6: How I feel about exams

Part A

Discuss the following statements. Which ones are true for you? Tick all the statements you agree with, then discuss your answers with a partner. Complete the final column with any comments that you might have.

1 lik	ce studying for exams because	True for me	Comments
1	they give me something concrete to aim at.		
2	they make me study harder.		
3	they make me revise and learn what I have been taught.		
4	the results show my family and friends what I can do.		
5	I can compare myself to other people to see how good I really am.		
6	I can get a qualification that will help me get a job or go to university.		
7	passing an exam makes me feel that I have achieved something and makes me feel good about myself.		

Part B

Discuss the following statements. Which ones are true for you? Tick all the statements you agree with, then discuss your answers with a partner. Complete the final column with ideas for solutions to the problems.

l di	slike studying for exams because	True for me	Solutions
1	I think doing exam practice is boring.		
2	I don't like the pressure of taking an exam – I get nervous.		
3	I find it hard to manage my time when there is so much to learn.		
4	I hate doing grammar, and never remember the rules!		
5	I don't know enough words.		
6	I always run out of time in an exam and so I never do very well.		
7	I'm afraid of failing.		

Developing good study skills

Many learners realise that they can't rely on their teacher to give them all the ideas they will need in the exam, and that they will need to do some independent study to reinforce classwork. However, they often don't know how to do this, and can also lack the organisational skills, time management and discipline needed.

C1 Good study habits For the teacher

Aims:

- To help the teacher to organise their own thoughts
- To help the teacher plan their course based on their own experience of study

Timing:

To be completed before the course starts

Rationale:

 Teachers have all taken exams themselves and have experience of what their students are starting out on. This experience can be drawn out to help the teacher tailor the course to students' needs.

Procedure:

 Complete the checklist at the start of the course, adding any ideas as the course progresses.

For students

Aims:

- To get students thinking about the experience of taking exams
- To get them thinking about what they can do to help themselves

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

• If students have ideas in one place, they can refer to them and add to them during the course. In this way, they can build study skills that will stand them in good stead in the future.

Procedure:

- Cut up the worksheet into cards. You need one set only of the 'What to do' cards, but make enough sets of the other cards ('Why it is good' and 'How to do it') for students to work in small groups and have a set each.
- Put the 'What to do' cards around the walls.
- Give out the sets of other cards to groups of students.
- Ask them to go round and stick the cards under the correct habits described on the 'What to do' cards.
- Discuss their answers, and compare the ideas of the different groups. Have they all stuck the same cards in the same place? If not, why not?
- Give out a copy of the completed worksheet to each student and tell them to keep it as a checklist during the course.

Worksheet C1: Good study habits – teacher

What to do	Why it is good	How to do it	Problems doing it	Solutions to problems
Regularly work on English outside class.				
Review everything done in class regularly.	If you don't do this, you won't know what you don't know — nor will the teacher.	Regular ten— minute sessions reading notes. Copy things up from class neatly.	Boring! Other things take priority.	Set aside a particular time every day.
Make a note of things you don't understand. Ask about them.		,		
Use reference books properly when you need to.				
Use practice tests sensibly.				
Find a time and a place to study by yourself.				
Organise your notes so that you can review your work and see how you are improving.				
Identify and correct your own mistakes.				
Keep a learner diary in which you record your feelings about the course, things you find easy, difficult, etc.				

Worksheet C1: Good study habits – students

What to do	Why it is good	How to do it
Regularly work on English outside class.	You can start to think in English!	Set aside a specific time to work on all aspects of your language.
Review everything done in class regularly.	If you don't do this, you won't know what you don't know – nor will the teacher.	Regular ten-minute sessions reading notes. Copy things up from class neatly.
Make a note of things you don't understand. Ask about them.	You can make sure that you don't forget to check things you are not sure about.	Keep a notepad with a 'to do' list, or make a note on your mobile phone or laptop.
Use reference books properly when you need to.	If you know the correct terminology, you can look things up when you have to check something.	Make a note of the right words for tenses, parts of speech, etc. and learn them.
Use practice tests sensibly.	If you just practise exam skills, you don't concentrate on learning the right language skills.	Only do tests when your teacher tells you to.
Find a time and a place to study by yourself.	It is easier to study when you are not distracted by friends or television.	Find a place you feel comfortable in, and go there regularly.
Organise your notes so that you can review your work and see how you are improving.	If you don't feel that you are getting better, it can be discouraging.	Set aside one time every week when you can go through your notes and check them. Have your marks improved?
Identify and correct your own mistakes.	It will be easier for you to check your writing in an exam if you look for mistakes regularly.	Identify the kind of mistakes you usually make. Look for these in every piece of writing you do.
Keep a learner diary in which you record your feelings about the course, things you find easy, difficult, etc.	Sometimes it is hard to understand why you don't enjoy things, or find them difficult. This will help you.	Write down your feelings once a week. Try to identify why you feel like this.

C2 What kind of a learner are you?

Aim:

To encourage students to think about how they prefer to learn

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

 Everyone studies and learns in different ways. This worksheet encourages students to think about their own study preferences and to become more independent as learners.

Procedure:

- Ask students to complete the worksheet for themselves.
- Ask them to count their A and B answers. Divide the class into two groups, 'mostly As' and 'mostly Bs'.
- Ask them to discuss their answers in their groups.
- Take class feedback and discuss the questions that follow. Make sure that students don't think there is a 'right' answer. The point of this exercise is to show students that everyone is different and that what works for one will not work for another. What is important is to think about it.

C3 How do you like to study? (Worksheet on page 33)

Aims:

- To get students to think about different ways they can approach the practicalities of studying
- To get students to think about what happens in the exam classroom, and how they feel about it

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

Students rarely think about what happens in the classroom, and how they feel
about it. If they find something difficult, they tend to think that it is their fault, and
not think about why they feel like this or what they can do about it. This activity
will help them to reflect on the classroom, and how they feel in it.

Procedure:

- Put students into pairs or small groups. Ask them to discuss the questions in the table and tick the appropriate box. They can add comments or amend the statements if they want to.
- Take general feedback.
- Ask students to work alone and complete the sentences in Exercise 2 for themselves.
- Ask them to compare their answers with others in their group, then take wholeclass feedback. Encourage students to explain their answers and talk about how they feel about activities done in class. This gives the teacher the chance to show how activities relate to exam tasks and therefore that everything is relevant and useful – even listening to songs.

1

Worksheet C2: What kind of a learner are you?

Ti	ick the option A or B that describes you best.	
1	A I always start homework as soon as possible to get it out of the way.B I leave things until the last minute because I work best under pressure.	
2	 A I think carefully before I do anything and plan everything I do or say. B I like to be spontaneous and just see what happens. 	
3	A I like working on my own.B I prefer working with others and discussing things.	
4	A I hate making mistakes, so I try to make everything perfect.B I like to make mistakes because then I learn from them.	
5	A I want to be told everything I need to know.B I prefer to discover things for myself.	
6	A I like everything to be clear, logical and easy.B I like solving problems and being challenged.	
7	 A I like everything I do to be perfect, and I will keep going until it is. B I just want to get things done quickly so that I don't have to think about them any more. 	
8	 A I feel more comfortable when I know the grammar rules and can practise them. B I don't need rules – I like to be spontaneous. 	
9	 A I feel comfortable with my bilingual dictionary – I need to know what the word means in my language, otherwise I get nervous. B I like using a monolingual dictionary – I feel as though I'm really learning the language, which gives me motivation and confidence. 	
D	Discuss the following questions with the rest of the class.	

2

- 1 How do you think your answers affect the way you study now?
- 2 Do you think you might make any changes after doing this questionnaire? How?

Worksheet C3: How do you like to study?

1 Complete the table by ticking the appropriate box. Then compare your answers with a partner.

	Totally true	Partly true	Not true at all
I like reading and collecting information.			
I remember things when I hear them.			
I need to write everything down, otherwise I forget it.			
I think that listening to music helps me concentrate when I study.			
I prefer to study when there are other people around.			
I need complete silence when I study.			
I hate asking for help because I feel embarrassed.			
I like to have all my papers well-organised and in good order.			

2	Complete the sentences about lessons so that they are true for you. Then
	discuss your answers with the rest of the class

1	l like it when the teacher
2	I enjoy the lessons most when
3	I enjoy studying in class because
4	I like/don't like listening to songs in class because
5	I like/don't like doing speaking activities in class because
6	In class, I find it easy to
7	In class, I find it difficult to

8 When we do practice tests in class, I feel because



Using reference material

Many teachers feel that using a dictionary in class is not a good thing because:

- students should develop skills that mean they don't have to rely on a dictionary.
- students may not be able to use a dictionary in the exam.
- students often only use a bilingual or electronic dictionary, which won't help them extend their vocabulary.

However, using a monolingual dictionary effectively is a real-life skill that will be useful to students all their lives.

D1 Using a dictionary

Aim:

To help students use a monolingual dictionary to extend their vocabulary

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

Students are often confused by the number of different meanings that a word
can have, and may choose the wrong one. This activity will help them to see
how to identify different meanings and how uses of a simple word like pick are
set out in a good monolingual dictionary.

Procedure:

- Choose a good dictionary such as the *Longman Exams Dictionary* or *Longman Active Study Dictionary* (where the sentences are taken from).
- Put students into pairs.
- Tell them to look up pick in the dictionary and see how many different meanings there are.
- Ask them how they know if the word is being used as a noun or verb, and to see what else they can find out about the word from the dictionary. Ask them to do Exercise 1.
- Then ask them to choose the best word or phrase to complete the sentences in Exercise 2.
- Finally, discuss any difficulties they may have had. Make sure that you focus on how using the dictionary made it easy to find the answers.

KEY:

- 1 You can find out about all of them apart from 'Comparison with other languages'.
- 2 1 choose 2 way 3 brains 4 on 5 up 6 take 7 out 8 fight

Worksheet D1: Using a dictionary

1 Which of the following can I find out from a monolingual dictionary?

	Yes	No
Different forms of the word		
Pronunciation and word stress		
Grammatical use of the word with examples		
Common collocations		
Different meanings of the word		
Fixed phrases		
Example sentences using the word in different ways		
Spelling		
Comparison with other languages		
Whether the word is formal or informal (register)		

2 Complete the sentences below using a phrase with pick. Use a dictionary to help you.

- 1 I am very difficult to please and always pick and what food I eat.
- 2 Sally picked her carefully across the slippery rocks.
- 3 I don't know what the answer to the problem is, so I've come to pick your
- 4 Paul doesn't like me and is always picking me.
- 5 I picked a few words of French while I was on holiday in France last year.
- 6 The dinner in the hotel was a buffet, so you could your pick of what
- 7 The woman was able to pick the mugger from photographs of known criminals.
- **8** He is very argumentative and often picks a for no apparent reason.

3 Did you find it easy to complete the sentences? Why/Why not?

D2 Recording vocabulary 1

Aims:

- To get students thinking about different ways of recording vocabulary
- To evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each approach
- To help students to choose the best approach for them to take

Timing:

10 minutes

Rationale:

Students often just write words down randomly, without thinking about how they will remember different things about the word later when they revise for the exam.

Procedure:

- Ask students to complete the table on the worksheet. They can refer to a monolingual dictionary if they like.
- Take feedback and discuss their ideas with the whole class.



Worksheet D2: Recording vocabulary 1

Which information will be most useful to help me learn a word so that I can use it in the exam or in real life?

	Very useful because	Not very useful because
Different forms of the word, e.g. noun, verb, adjective		
Words that are used with the word, e.g. prepositions		
Collocations		
Spelling		
Register – is the word formal or informal?		
Pronunciation		
Meaning with example sentences		
Translation		

D3 Recording vocabulary 2

Aim:

To get students thinking about different ways of recording different types of words

Timing:

10 minutes

Rationale:

• Students may not have had the opportunity to try out different ways of recording vocabulary, so they may not have thought about how easy each one might be.

Procedure:

- Ask them to look at the three suggestions for recording vocabulary. Ask them to think about the advantages and disadvantages of each one.
- Then see if they have any other ideas for recording vocabulary.

KEY:

A Spidergram

- + helps students to make connections, good for visual learners
- not everyone thinks like this, can be confusing, doesn't include examples

B List

- + can include examples, can be clear, easy to include more information
- can be difficult to remember, can be difficult to find the word

C Translation

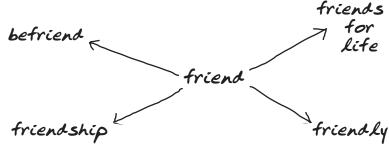
- + can save time, can be easy for students to remember if there are links to their language
- can be confusing/mistranslated, false friends, doesn't help students to think in the target language, can make students rely on bilingual dictionaries

Worksheet D3: Recording vocabulary 2

1 Look at the word below.

friend

- 2 Below are three suggested ways of recording it. Read them and complete Example C (Translation) with your own language.
 - A Spidergram



B List

friend - noun (person), singular E.g. My best friend is called Juan.

friendly – adjective E.g. My neighbour is very friendly.

friendship - noun, singular

E.g. His friendship means a lot to me.

C Translation

English	My language
friend	•••••
friendship	
friendly	•••••

- 3 Try recording the word family in each of the different ways. Which way do you think is most useful? Why?
- 4 Which way do you prefer to record vocabulary? Why? Do you think you might try one of these ways?

D4 Recording vocabulary 3

Aims:

- To get students thinking about different ways they like to record vocabulary
- To think about the advantages and disadvantages of each approach
- To help students to choose the best approach for them to take

Timing:

10 minutes

Rationale:

 Students often just write words down randomly, without thinking about how they will remember different things about the word later when they revise for the exam.

Procedure:

- Divide the class into six groups. Give each group a copy of the worksheet and ask them to fold it where shown.
- Write six vocabulary points on the board, e.g. a fixed phrase, a collocation, an
 idiom, a verb, a noun, an adjective. Allocate one of these to each group, and ask
 them to write it at the top of their paper.
- Ask them to think about the best way of recording their vocabulary item so that
 they can remember it best. They should write this down in the space created by
 the first fold in the paper if they choose a diagram, they should draw this.
- They then fold the paper so that their idea is hidden, but the vocabulary point is still visible. They pass it to the next group, who should not open the paper but should write their own idea for the best way of recording that vocabulary item in the next available space.
- They then fold the paper so that the ideas are both hidden, but the vocabulary item is still visible, and pass it on for the last time.
- When each piece of paper has been round three groups, the fourth group should open the paper and look at all the suggestions.
- There can then be a class discussion on the different ideas, and why different ideas work better for different vocabulary items.
- Finally, collect in all the pieces of paper for your own information.

Worksheet D4: Recording vocabulary 3

Vocabulary item:	
	fold
Suggestion 1:	
	fold
Suggestion 2:	10.10
	fold
Suggestion 3:	

D5 Using a grammar reference book 1

Most coursebooks have a grammar reference section, which students will be familiar with. Encourage them to use this section when they review the lesson, and to use the explanations when they do revision for the exam.

However, students may not know how to use a grammar reference book, and may feel put off by the size of the book and the amount of information. They may also be uncertain of the terminology for different structures.

Aims:

- To familiarise students with a grammar reference book they will be able to use themselves
- To give them confidence in understanding the explanations
- To give the teacher information about what grammar areas they need to revise with students later

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

- To give students confidence to look up things they are not sure of in a grammar book.
- It will also give students strategies for working with grammar points and asking for clarification, which will enable them to study better on their own.

Procedure:

- Put students into small groups. Ask them to think about a grammar area that
 they know about, e.g. so/such. Alternatively, choose several areas yourself, put
 them on the board and allocate each one to a group.
- Ask the group to write their grammar point at the top of the worksheet, and pass it to the next group. The second group has to find the relevant page in the grammar book and write the page number on the paper. They should read the grammar explanation and see if they can write a question about it for the first group to answer. This could be a question for them to explain, or sentences for them to complete.
- They should then pass the paper back to the first group, who will try to answer the question. They can check their answer, using the page number, and ask the teacher if they still have problems.

Worksheet D5: Using a grammar reference book 1

D6 Using a grammar reference book 2

Aims:

- To help students understand some grammatical terms so that they can use a grammar book easily
- · To help students identify different grammatical areas

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

• If students don't know the grammatical terms, they can't use a grammar book or a dictionary efficiently. They also need to be able to spot their own mistakes and self-correct.

Procedure:

- Play this as a team game.
- Put students into two teams, A and B. Give out the worksheet. Students work together in teams to complete the answers, trying not to let the others hear what they are saying. They can refer to a grammar book if necessary.
- Then play the game.
- A person from Team A chooses someone from Team B to answer one of the questions. The student from Team A <u>must</u> know the answer to the question they choose! If the person from Team B gets it right, then Team B get the point. If Team B cannot answer, then Team A must give the answer. If Team A are right, they get the point. If they are wrong, then Team B get two points.

KEY:

- 1 It was/has been a terrible journey.
- 2 Past Perfect
- 3 look up
- 4 Third Conditional
- 5 the, definite article
- 6 [the teacher must judge these answers]
- **7** of
- 8 Not only does he like music, but he also likes dancing.
- **9** The burglar was caught by the police.
- **10** A
- 11 compose verb
 - composer noun
 - composition noun
 - composed adjective composedly adverb
- 12 ... stay at the home ...

Worksheet D6: Using a grammar reference book 2

Question	Our answer	Person nominated to answer	Correct or incorrect
What words did the person actually say? She said that it had been a terrible journey.			
2 What is the name of this tense? had + past participle			
3 Complete the sentence below with a phrasal verb. I had to the answer in the grammar book because I didn't know what it was.			
4 Which form of the Conditional is this – first, second or third? If I had got up earlier, I would have caught the bus.			
5 Which word is missing in the sentence below? What is it called in the grammar book? I hate getting up early in mornings.			
6 Write a sentence using the Present Perfect tense.			
7 Complete the sentence below with a dependent preposition. The food is typical this region.			
8 Correct the sentence below. Not only he likes music, but also he likes dancing.			
9 Change the active sentence below into the passive form. The police caught the burglar.			
10 Which sentence is correct, A or B? A I like to have some fun when I go out. B I like to have any fun when I go out.			
11 Which of the two words below are nouns? What form are the other words? compose composer composition composed composed			
12 What is the extra, unnecessary word in the sentence below? She wanted to go to the cinema, but had no one to go with, so she decided to stay at the home by herself.	d		

D7 Using a grammar reference book 3

Aim:

• To help students think about grammar they don't understand

Timing:

15 minutes

Rationale:

• Students often think that they understand a grammar point when they don't. This activity is a useful way to help the teacher diagnose student problems.

Procedure:

- Stick the names of different grammar areas on pieces of paper around the walls.
- When you say *Go!*, each student can go and take one that they think they understand or can explain.
- They then exchange their paper with a partner.
- They write the name of the grammar point they have been given on the worksheet, then research it in a grammar book.
- They then work with their partner and discuss each other's notes. If they don't understand something about the grammar point they were given, they should ask their partner to explain it.
- Students should make a note of any questions from their partners that they can't answer, and ask the teacher.

Worksheet D7: Using a grammar reference book 3

1 Fill in the chart below. Grammar area: Notes: 2 Make a note of any questions from your partner that you can't answer. Check with the teacher. **Questions:**