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More Practical Everyday English,

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Introduction
PRACTICAL EVERYDAY ENGLISH
Steven Collins

Can you speak English as well as this?:

Yesterday the Chairman of ABC Ltd, one of Britain's largest companies, said: "The economy cannot **put up with** any more wage increases this year. The strength of the service industry is **overrated** and cannot be relied upon to **make up** for the **appalling** performance of British manufacturers. A change can only **come about** if the Government **gets things underway** immediately, before we plunge even further into recession.

Mr Smith, the Managing Director of a small clothing company in the South-West, said: "When I set up my business at the beginning of the year, I did not know **what I was letting myself in for**. I **took it for granted** that strikes were **unheard of** in this part of the country and interest rates would **keep up with** the rate of inflation, but everything has **turned out** to be less **straightforward**".

Or this?:

At the Post office:

Clerk: Hi Mrs. Johnson, I haven't seen you for **ages**. What have you **been up to**?

Mrs Johnson: **Bringing up** three screaming kids and **putting up** with a **nagging** husband. I **could** really **do with** a week on my own... and then I could **get down to sorting** myself **out**.

Clerk: I know how you feel. We all need time **to gather** our thoughts and escape from the **relentless** stress of our daily lives.

Mrs Johnson: Oh dear. You sound worse than me.

Clerk: Not really... You should know by now that you must take everything I say with **a pinch of salt**... Now what can I do for you today?

Mrs Johnson: Well, I must **get** these parcels **off** to Australia before Christmas. What's the quickest way?

Clerk: You can send it by Swiftair. It guarantees three day delivery... but it'll **work out** more expensive than the **run of the mill** postal service.

Mrs Johnson: Yes I know, but it has to be done so I **might as well** go for it.

Clerk: Fine... but you'd better **get a move on**. Last post leaves at 12.30.

I would now like to ask you two further questions:

1. Can you understand every single word in these passages?
2. Would you be able to use all of them naturally in an everyday conversation?

If the answer to either of these questions is "no", then I believe this book can be of great help to you.

Purpose of the Book

You may feel, as an upper intermediate or advanced student, very frustrated at your recent lack of progress in English. Your grammar is good; you have taken and passed some of the important recognised written English exams but you still struggle to follow a conversation between native English speakers. You feel stupid and depressed that, despite years of studying English and even living in an English speaking country, you keep having to say, "Sorry, I don't understand. Can you repeat that please?" You pick up a newspaper and often only understand 50% of what you are reading, especially reported speech. Television and the cinema, without subtitles, present you with enormous difficulties... Or maybe you can understand nearly everything but feel you cannot express yourself in modern, idiomatic English.

DON'T WORRY. RELAX! THIS IS ALL PERFECTLY NORMAL.

If you study this book one page a day and keep listening to the CD (at the back of the book), you will soon notice a huge improvement in your listening and speaking skills.

The Audio CD (see back of book)

The CD with this book only relates to the dialogues appearing at the end of each chapter. I make no apology for the fact that it is only an audio CD and not a CD Rom with pretty pictures, games and music. You are not children! The biggest problem for adult students of English is understanding [Practical Everyday English](#) spoken at speed. (Do you speak your own language slowly?)

It is different from any other English aural teaching aid you will have used before. Most audio work in the English teaching world is presented by trained actors speaking unnaturally slowly. Although this CD has been professionally recorded in a modern studio, the voices are those of a variety of English speakers, all talking at their normal speed. One of the male speakers is particularly fast. This is excellent practice for all students. You are unlikely to be able to understand the CD without the text from the book in front of you. After you have listened to a particular passage while following in the book, you should then listen to it again with the book closed... and again... and again.

This way, you will soon get accustomed to listening to conversational English spoken at high speed.

The Method and Structure of the Book

[Practical Everyday English](#) is not just a book, but a **method** which helps upper intermediate and advanced students to understand and then use everyday vocabulary. Most of the material in the book is good conversational English rather than academic. However, I should like to point out that “good conversational English” does *not* mean street slang. There is included within the book a small amount of slang which now passes as “acceptable” English but even members of the British Royal Family would use most of the phrases and idioms contained in these pages.

The method is simple: in almost every example in the book, apart from the first few pages, I have tried to use a word or phrase that has been taught on earlier pages. For example, in Chapter 5 the reader is taught the expression **To get carried away** which means to become too enthusiastic about something. One of the examples given is:

*I got a bit **carried away** with the shopping today. My wife is **bound** to **hit the roof** when she finds out how much money I've **got through**.*

He or she will already know **To be bound to**, **To hit the roof** and **To get through** because they appear in earlier chapters. Therefore, after reading these words and expressions time and time again, the students will find themselves being able to understand, speak and write [Practical Everyday English](#) almost automatically.

The book consists of:

Nine Chapters, each one containing

Three Lessons consisting of ten or more words or expressions, plus examples.

At the end of each chapter is a series of

Dialogues containing words taught in that chapter and finally a ‘gap-filling’

Exercise, with answers at the end of the book. And an

Audio CD containing all the dialogues.

For Students

Suggestions on How to Use the Book as a Self-Study Guide

There are basically two ways in which you can use this book:

First Method

You can study the book by reading each lesson as it appears (i.e. from Page One, Chapter One). It is probably sufficient to study one lesson a week and then go back and revise each chapter as it is finished. After finishing each chapter, you should read through the dialogues while listening to the CD and test yourself by completing the exercises.

The help of a native English speaking teacher would be of great benefit as you can think of your own examples which can then be corrected by this person. However, the book is specifically designed for self-study and, providing you have the required level of vocabulary and grammar, 'outside' help should not prove necessary.

Second Method

The second method may be preferred by those of you who have little time to sit down and study the book thoroughly. At the back of the book you will see an index of all the words and expressions included, together with the page numbers.

In other words, the book can be used almost like a dictionary. If, whilst reading or listening to English, you find a word or expression you have never heard before or perhaps you have heard but do not know how to use, then try to find it in the index. This will refer to the particular word or expression and generally to two or more examples. However, it is quite possible that you will not understand some of the examples because, as mentioned earlier, they nearly all contain words from previous lessons which you may not have studied before.

Therefore, if you have time to study, you should adopt the first method. Once you feel confident, you should try to use what you have learned at every available opportunity.

For Teachers

Suggestions on How to Teach Small Classes Using this Book

Firstly, I have to be honest and tell you that, even though you do not have to be a native English speaker in order to teach properly from this book, your own conversational and grammatical English should be native speaker level; near native level is not sufficient. As an English mother tongue speaker teaching from this book for many years, I have often had to say to a student, "Your example is grammatically correct... but we just wouldn't say it like that". Only a native level speaker can say that to a class. In addition, a good few years' experience of teaching high level students will also be invaluable.

PREPARATION

Step One

The first thing you must do is familiarise yourself with the text. This does not mean reading the book word-for-word but simply getting to grips with the general layout of the chapters and the philosophy behind the method.

Step Two

This book contains a wide range of formal and informal vocabulary which is essential for the advanced level learner of English. The material is presented by way of practical examples which usually contain words which the student will have studied at an earlier stage in the book. The important thing for you to do at this stage is to ask yourself: "Are my students ready for this level of English?" There is no point in teaching someone, for example, the difference between **To make a fuss** and **To make a fuss of** (see Page 3) or complicated phrasal verbs such as **To come over** (Page 12), if they cannot construct or understand basic English sentences.

Step Three

If the students are 'up to it', they should have a copy of the book which they should not bring to class. They ought also to be told not to look ahead at the words they are going to study in the lesson but only use the book at home for revision purposes.

IN THE LESSON

Step One

You should begin by asking the students if they know the meaning of the words or expressions you are going to teach them from the book. For argument's sake, let us take the very first lesson; we begin with the words **Quite a few**. Most students think that this means 'not many'. It is important not to tell them what it means but to encourage them to work it out for themselves, which is why it is mentioned earlier that the students should not read ahead. This is best done by reading the first example to them. They should then be able to guess the meaning of the word. Whether or not they have been able to do this, you should then read the second example.

Step Two

Once the students have heard both examples (sometimes there are three or four) and worked out the sense of the word, you should then explain it in more detail, referring to the meaning given in the book.

It is then a good idea to ask one of the students to explain the meaning of the example. In this way, the students will begin to feel that they completely understand a word that they were unsure of or had not heard previously.

Step Three

You should continue in exactly the same way until that lesson finishes; that is, introducing a word, giving examples, asking students what they think the word means and finally giving a more complete explanation. At the end of the lesson, you should record where you finish. For example, imagine you finish the lesson with the word **Fussy**, then you should make the following record in your notebook:

[Date] – **Quite a few** (Page 1) ... **Fussy** (Page 3)

Step Four

For homework, you should ask the students to study everything you have done that day, at home, by referring to the book. They should then prepare their own examples for the next lesson.

Step Five

At the beginning of the following lesson, you should go around the class asking for examples and explanations of the words you taught in the previous lesson. In the first few lessons, it is important to encourage the students to use simple constructions. You will find that the majority of the mistakes they make will be grammatical. Once again, it is important to encourage them to think and correct themselves. If they have used the word or expression more or less correctly but have got the tense wrong, then instead of correcting them, you should simply ask them: "What tense should you be using?" In this way, their grammar will improve as well as their vocabulary.

Step Six

Some complicated constructions have been used in the examples. If, for example, you discover that your students do not know the tenses we use after the verb **To wish** (e.g. the past continuous – "I wish I wasn't going out tonight"), then it may be a good idea to stop the lesson at that point and go through the grammatical problems with them (but their grammar should already be very good and you should not waste too much time).

Step Seven

After they have studied the first two lessons of Chapter One, you should encourage them to use the words they have learned, when giving their own examples. Many of the examples included in this book have been provided by students themselves. When a student was once asked to give an example of **To wind up** (see Page 148), he said "If you don't cut out smoking, you could **wind up** having to undergo heart surgery". He had already studied **To cut out** and **To undergo** in previous lessons.

Step Eight

Finally, the importance of revision must be emphasised. As mentioned earlier, in nearly all the examples, the words which are used have been previously taught so the students will automatically be doing some sort of revision all the time. However, this is not sufficient; they need to be able to give you examples 'on the spur of the moment'.

Therefore, it is suggested each time you finish a chapter, you should go back and revise that chapter by insisting that all students close their exercise books, look up and respond quickly when asked for examples. You should then ask them to read at home the dialogues appearing at the end of the chapter whilst listening to the CD and then get them to complete the gap-filling exercise. Every time you finish three chapters, you should do a revision of those last three chapters in the same 'quick fire' way. Lastly, when Chapter Nine is finished, a complete revision of the book should be done. By constant revision, you will notice that the students become much more natural in their use of **Practical Everyday English**.

If you follow the procedures as set out above (there are of course no rules – this is only a guideline), and the students are at the right level, you should derive much pleasure from teaching your students this level of English, especially when you can see that, at long last, they are beginning to 'get the hang of' this rich but mind-boggling language.

Steven Collins

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