



Cover design Amanda Lillywhite

For anyone concerned about better English - *parents, tutors, teachers, employers, and students*. For anyone who wants to help.

Peter Inson's book is the kind of text which we need in the education system in this country - a rich and wide-ranging resource which does not reduce the acquisition of facility in and understanding of English language to a narrow diet of examination preparation. But far from looking away from the requirements of public examinations, the book encourages the kind of learning which is associated with higher attainment in exams, through a deeper understanding of language structures.

So often, books have to be discarded the moment a new exam specification is produced. Not so with this text. It promises to be an enduring resource for teachers and learners which can support learning associated with different exam boards, different awards, and remain relevant and supportive as exams specifications shift and change.

Tim Oates - Group Director - Cambridge Assessment

An introduction

You may be reading this because you are concerned about your English.

You may be reading this because someone else is concerned about your English.

Does English matter?

Yes. It matters a lot.

English, our language, is what allows us to communicate everything we know. If we fail to communicate clearly, whatever we know is lost.

This is something by which other people judge us, especially employers.

You might have failed English at school but at least you are reading this.

Now you have a choice.

You will either continue failing or you will do something about it.

Good. That's settled then.

This manual will help you understand the way that we use our language so that you read and write effectively, as an educated adult who writes confidently and can check his or her own work.

Now you can be as good as anyone else.

Want to understand something so that you can use it properly?

Then take it to bits.

Yes. You can even dismantle the English language!

Look, my first car, a Ford Prefect which cost me £10.

I neglected it - car engines run very badly without oil.

From a scrap yard I bought a replacement engine.

Before I installed it, I dismantled it to see how it worked.



Piston rings - replaced to reduce oil consumption and improve the compression.

Wear on the cylinders and looseness of the bearings - checked.

Exhaust valves - reground to last much longer.

Twenty-four hours later I had re-assembled the engine and lifted it into the car. I pulled the starter and, first time of asking, the engine sprang into life: one of my proudest moments.

I GOT THE CAR RUNNING BY LEARNING HOW IT WORKS.

Now we are going to dismantle English so that you can learn to use it well.

Here comes a short taster; if you can follow this you will succeed with the rest of the book.

A TASTE OF WHAT'S TO COME - LOOK AT THREE SENTENCES.

“To study your own language is different from studying anything else. An engineer can leave a machine in pieces and forget it when he goes down to the pub but we have to continue using our language even when we are studying it. So, I'd like a pint.”

Let's look at the final, short sentence, “So, I'd like a pint.” This is what is important:

- It follows a sentence which is long and complicated. A break is welcome, a short sentence with a single, simple idea.
- The capital S at the start reminds us that we have come to a new sentence, that we might have to take a breath if we are reading aloud, and that a pause will allow more of the second, long sentence to sink in.
- The word *So*, followed by a comma, commands attention before the speaker tells everyone what he or she would like to drink.
- The full stop at the end makes it clear that there is nothing more to say. The speaker could have gone on to say just what was wanted: a pint of orange squash, tea or a favourite beer. Perhaps there was no need to say exactly what was wanted because he or she was among friends.

Not one of these points is difficult. These are not new ideas. These are ideas that you carry around with you because you carry the English language with you. I couldn't explain these things to you if you didn't.

All I have done is to help you to understand what you already know.

All you need now is some determination and some time. This manual will provide new ways of understanding, and lots of encouragement.

START NOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH

Read for a minimum of ten minutes every day. **R**

Choose a newspaper or magazine, a book - conventional or electronic, fiction or non-fiction. If you can't get on with it after ten minutes find something else for tomorrow. Read things with ordinary sized print, not pages of pictures or headlines. Further help can be found later in the book.

Writing for five minutes a day - a mini-blog perhaps. Try to write in complete sentences - just few lines of your own thoughts or observations about anything you like. Read it aloud to yourself; then keep it as a diary or throw it away. **W**

Whatever else you do -

Ignore anyone who tries to tease, mock, embarrass or ridicule you about this; you are doing something important to help yourself. These people will not be around when you need a job or opportunities to make something of your life. Adults make their own choices for their own reasons, not other people's.

Throughout the book you will find the **READING** and **WRITING** reminders, **R** and **W**. When you find one of these you will have to imagine the sound of my voice asking whether you are doing these things every day. If it helps you can listen to my voice at: <http://www.peterinson.net/page62.html>

******** simply marks something really important.

Extra Practice Wherever you find this 40/60 symbol, stop and look again at the section or topic which you have just completed.

Then you should write three or four sentences, between forty and sixty words of your own, on the same topic or practising the same skills.

For example, if you have been working on phrases try composing a sentence or two, each with several phrases.



Leave alternate lines clear as you write so that you can easily alter or correct what you have written.

Check what you have written by reading it **ALoud**, or by getting someone else to read it **ALoud**. Work on the words until **you** are comfortable with them.

Essentials Use these sections as a further check, to find the most important basic ideas.



NOW IT'S TIME TO GET STARTED. GOOD LUCK!