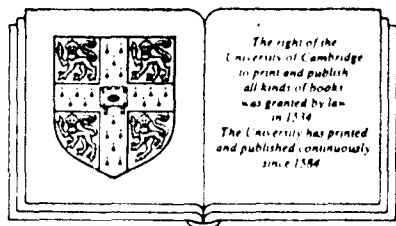


Functions of American English

Communication activities
for the classroom

Student's Book

Leo Jones
C. von Baeyer



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Introduction to the student

Please read this Introduction carefully to get to know the aims and methods of this book.

Who is this book for?

Functions of American English is for high intermediate and advanced learners who feel confident about using basic English grammar and vocabulary, and who are now ready to learn more about using English in real-life situations. This book is accompanied by a tape and a Teacher's Manual.

What does this book cover?

In order for your English to be effective, it must be appropriate to the situation you are in. So, when you are trying to choose the best way to express yourself in a particular situation, you have to keep in mind several things:

- What are you trying to do with your English sentences? Are you describing something, persuading someone, giving your opinion, or what? These are called *language functions*.
- What is your *role* in this situation? Are you a friend, stranger, employee, customer?
- Where are you talking? Is the *setting* on a plane, at a party, at a meeting?
- What are you talking about? Is the *topic* business, travel, sport?

Each unit in this book describes three important *language functions*. For example, the first unit covers "talking about yourself," "starting a conversation," and "making a date." The exercises in each unit let you practice all sorts of useful roles and topics in all sorts of typical places. You will practice the English that you know already and learn many useful new ways of saying things.

This book is just the starting point, though. There are many places in the book where you may want to ask your teacher for more information or for more time to practice some new material.

How is this book organized?

Each unit in *Functions of American English* is divided into several sections:

Conversation

This illustrates how each language function could be carried out during a conversation. Don't read the conversation section in the book until you have listened to the tape at least twice. This is *not* a "dialogue" that you

have to learn by heart. Sometimes the teacher will tell you the situation that the conversation takes place in, and sometimes you should try to guess. The same six characters keep appearing in different situations throughout the book.

Presentations

The presentation sections include descriptions of the functions and various ways of carrying them out. When you come to a presentation, read it by yourself. Then keep your book closed while the teacher presents the ideas using the board and the tape, and asks you for your ideas. Make sure that you can pronounce the new expressions well. There are usually three presentations in a unit.

Exercises

There are several exercises after each presentation. The first one is often directed by the teacher, so that you have a chance to ask for help and advice. For the other exercises, the class is divided up into pairs or small groups of students who work on their own. Try hard to use new expressions that you have just learned in the presentation.

Many units have a Consolidation exercise at the end. In this kind of exercise you can practice expressions from all the presentations in the unit.

Communication activities

The exercises are often followed by instructions to look at a particular number in the *Communication activities* section at the back of this book. The activities involve two or more sides communicating with each other in discussions, role plays, problem-solving activities, etc. Each side has different instructions, printed on different pages so that the participants can't see each other's instructions. In this way you can have information that is different from your partner's information, just as in most real communication outside the classroom.


Please, don't prepare the communication activities ahead of time – let them be a surprise. And don't look at your partner's instructions – keep the activities spontaneous.

Try to experiment with different ways to get your point across in these activities. Be as talkative as you can – never just say *Yes* or *No*. And don't be afraid to make mistakes – learn from them! Your teacher will be going around from group to group to listen and help. At the end of each activity, the class will discuss difficulties, and the teacher will point out serious mistakes that would make a listener misunderstand something.

Written work

The written work at the end of each unit gives you further practice on some important items from the unit. Again, experiment with new ways of communicating.

The tape

 marks sections that are recorded on the cassette tape.

Conclusion

This book may be a little different from what you are used to. Don't be surprised – a course that teaches conversation must be a little unpredictable, since real-life conversations are so often unpredictable. We hope that you find working with these materials interesting and enjoyable.

1

Talking about yourself, starting a conversation, making a date

1.1

Conversation



John: Excuse me, is anybody sitting here?

Anne: Uh no . . . no, here, let me move my purse from the chair.

John: Oh, thank you. Say, haven't I seen you with Jack Davidson?

Anne: I work with Jack Davidson. How do you know Jack?

John: Oh, Jack and I went to school together. What sort of work do you do?

Anne: Oh, I . . . I work on commercial accounts at the trust company with Jack. Um . . . what do you do?

John: I'm a telephone installer – I just happen to be working on this street the last couple of days. I should introduce myself – my name's John Spencer.

Anne: Well pleased to meet you! I'm Anne Kennedy.

John: Happy to know you. Do you live around here?

Anne: Yeah, I live in the neighborhood – it's real convenient to work.

John: Oh, it sounds like . . .

[fade]

John: . . . Are you doing anything tonight?

Anne: Oh . . . uh, sorry, I'm afraid I'm busy tonight.

John: Well how about tomorrow? Maybe we could go to a movie.
 Anne: Hey, that sounds like a great idea! Um ... do you like comedies?
 John: Oh yeah, I like comedies ... uh, let's see, what could we see? How about *Bread and Chocolate*? I think that's playing over at ...
 Anne: Ah ...
 John: ... on Main Street there.
 Anne: That's a great idea.
 John: Well I guess, uh, we should meet about eight o'clock then, 'cause I think the movie starts about eight-thirty. Uh, where would be a good place to meet?
 Anne: There's ... uh ... there's a clock tower near the movie theater. We could meet there at about eight.
 John: OK. That sounds good. See you tomorrow, then.
 Anne: I'll see you then. Goodbye!
 John: Bye-bye.

1.2

Presentation: talking about yourself

The presentation sections in this book usually give you some new expressions to learn. But for now, use the English you already know. The aim of the following three exercises is to give you a chance to get used to the methods that will be used throughout the book. Try to ask as many short questions as possible to get as much information as you can from your partner in each exercise. Try to answer in long sentences; keep talking; do not just say Yes or No. If you don't know what to say or how to continue, ask your teacher.

1.3

Exercise

Get together with another student. Introduce yourselves first and then find out about each other. Be friendly. Your teacher will demonstrate first. Here are some ideas to start off with, but ask for as much detail as possible. Ask about his or her:

- FAMILY Brothers and sisters. Parents. Childhood – happy? Home – where does he or she live?
- FRIENDS Many or just a few? What do they talk about and do together? Is it easy to make new friends?
- EDUCATION Different schools, colleges, or universities. Favorite subjects at school and why. Diplomas and degrees. Future plans.
- EMPLOYMENT Present job. What exactly does he or she do? Advantages and disadvantages. Previous jobs – details. Future plans.
- FREE TIME Hobbies. Sports. TV, radio, movies. What does he or she do on weekends and in the evening? What does he or she like to read?
- TRAVEL Countries visited. Parts of own country he or she knows. Languages. Favorite kind of vacation. Future plans.

After everyone has finished, tell the whole class the most interesting things you found out about your friend.

Get together with a different student from the one you talked with in 1.3. Look at the questionnaire below. Help each other to fill in the blanks. Discuss how to answer the more difficult questions. When you have finished, compare your answers with another pair of students. Give your completed questionnaire to your teacher to read and correct.

Questionnaire

Last name _____

First name _____

Nationality _____

Permanent address _____

Present address _____

Occupation or subject you are studying _____

High school education _____

Degrees or other qualifications _____

Other education and language courses _____

What foreign languages do you speak and how well? _____

Have you ever lived in a place where people speak English most of the time? If so, for how long? _____

What English textbooks have you used? _____

When do you (or will you) need to use English? _____

In what areas does your English need the most improvement? _____

What is the main thing that you hope to get from this course? _____

Imagine that you are at a cocktail party with the rest of the class. At a cocktail party everyone stands with a drink, chats for a few minutes to one guest, and then is expected to *circulate* and move on to another guest. The host or hostess (your teacher) normally speeds up the circulation by introducing guests to each other. Now stand up and have a party! Talk to as many people as possible.



It is often difficult to make contact with strangers who speak another language – unless you know a few opening gambits, of course! Here are some useful ways of starting a conversation with a stranger:

Nice day, isn't it?

Horrible weather we're having.

Excuse me, is anybody sitting here?

Say, don't I know you from somewhere?

Sorry, I couldn't help overhearing – did you mention something about ...

Excuse me, have you got a light?

Uh, could you help me, I'm looking for ...

Think of some situations where you would use each of these opening gambits. Decide with your teacher when they would be appropriate and what you might say next. Do people in your neighborhood start conversations with strangers in lineups, in stores, in buses?

To practice ways of starting a conversation, the class is divided into two groups: A and B. If you are in group A, look at communication activity 151 at the back of the book; if you are in group B, look at communication activity 38.

After you have made contact and had a short conversation, you may want to arrange another meeting. These are expressions you can use to arrange to meet someone:

Uh, are you going to be busy this evening?

Um, I was thinking of going to a movie tonight. Would you like to come?

Are you doing anything tonight? I was wondering if you'd like to go to a movie with me.

I'm going to a play with a group of friends. Would you like to join us?

YES! *That'd be very nice.*

I'd love to.

That's a great idea.

NO! *Sorry, I'm afraid I'm busy tonight.*

Tonight's a problem. What about tomorrow night?

Sorry, I've got people coming over tonight.

Think of some possible situations that you would use each of these expressions in. Decide with your teacher when each expression would be appropriate and what you might say before and after.

1.9

Exercise

Make up conversations from the cues below, using expressions presented in 1.8. Follow this pattern:



A: I'm going to have some people over for dinner tomorrow night.

Would you like to join us?

B: Oh, I'm afraid I'm busy tomorrow night.

A: Some other time maybe?

B: Sure. Thanks for asking me.

movie

picnic

play

football game

drink

swimming

lunch/dinner

drive

dancing

roller skating

1.10

Exercise

Get up again and try to make a date with the people you contacted earlier. One way to begin might be: *Oh, it's nice to see you again. How are you?*

Remember that if you become too friendly or emotional, the person you are talking to may think you want a favor or that you are not sincere. Of course, if you are not friendly enough, you will sound rude.

Keep experimenting and practicing until you feel comfortable with the expressions in this unit.

Discuss each of the following with your teacher before you do them yourself. Decide on the best way to approach each one:

- 1 Imagine two people meeting for the first time and write the conversation between them in dialogue form.
- 2 Imagine that you are writing your first letter to an American pen pal. Introduce yourself, so that he or she has an impression of what kind of person you are.
- 3 Write a letter inviting an American acquaintance to spend the weekend with your family.

2

Asking for information: question techniques, answering techniques, getting more information

2.1

Conversation



- Sue: Hi, Anne!
- Anne: Oh hi, Sue!
- Sue: Uh listen, I was wondering if you could help me. Do you happen to know where there's a good place to buy art supplies?
- Anne: I'm not really sure. Hey, let me think for a minute. Oh yeah, there's that new place, Mixed Media – you know, it's down on Main Street?
- Sue: Mm, I don't know that store – exactly where on Main Street?
- Anne: Well, you know where the new vegetarian restaurant is – it's right up a block.
- Sue: Oh yes, I know where you mean now.
- Anne: Hey, I hope you don't mind my asking, but are you taking up painting?
- Sue: [laughs] Are you kidding? I can't paint! I'm just asking for my sister's son. He's really into it.
- Anne: Ah . . . oh, I see. Hey, are you still doing your photography? You're really good at that.



Sue: Yeah, that's the one thing I really enjoy.
 Anne: Hey listen. This may sound like a dumb question, but can you get any good pictures on an automatic?
 Sue: No, no, no, now that's a very interesting question. Automatics are OK, except for special effects, or stop action.
 Anne: Oh, and it . . . listen, there's something else I was wondering about – like, should you do all your own developing?
 Sue: Oh no! You don't have to develop your own. You can get good prints if you send them out.
 Anne: No kidding! Could you tell me something more about it – like, if I was going to set up a darkroom, what would I really be using it for – what kind of equipment would I need?
 Sue: Oh well, you'd need your enlarger, and . . . and chemicals, but actually developing is only cheaper when you're doing a lot of enlargements.
 Anne: Oh, I see. Can I ask if you're making any money at it?
 Sue: [laughs] Well, I'm making enough, and . . . well, it's tax time, so that's something I'd rather not talk about.
 Anne: [laughs] I really understand. Well, I got to be getting along now, so, so long!
 Sue: Bye!

2.2

Presentation: question techniques

A conversation often depends on questions to keep it going in the direction you want it to go. The one who asks the questions in a conversation usually controls the conversation. Various techniques may be necessary to get different kinds of information from different people. Most people are very polite when they ask a stranger about something – if you are more direct, you may appear to be rude. Anyway, personal questions have to be expressed very politely. Here are some useful opening expressions you can use to lead up to questions:

I was wondering if you could help me. I'd like to know . . .

I wonder if you could tell me . . .

This may sound like a dumb question, but I'd like to know . . .

Excuse me, do you know . . . ?

I hope you don't mind my asking, but I'd like to know . . .

Something else I'd like to know is . . .

Decide with your teacher when such expressions might be appropriate. They are also useful as "hesitation devices" to give you time to prepare your thoughts!

2.3

Exercise

Make notes for yourself about five pieces of general information and five pieces of personal information you would like from your teacher. Take turns asking your teacher questions. Be careful to be very polite when asking personal questions. When you have finished, ask a friend similar questions.



You may often need to delay answering a question while you think for a moment or check on your facts. Here are some useful techniques for delaying your answer:

Well, let me see . . .

Well now . . .

Oh, let me think for a minute . . .

I'm not sure; I'll have to check . . .

That's a very interesting question.

On the other hand, you may not know the answer or you may want to avoid giving an answer for some reason. Then you can use expressions like:

I'm not really sure.

I can't answer that one.

I'm sorry, I really don't know.

I've got no idea.

I'd like to help you, but . . .

That's something I'd rather not talk about just now.

Think of some situations when you might use these expressions. Decide with your teacher when they would be appropriate.

2.5**Exercise**

Now your teacher is going to ask you questions like the ones you asked in 2.3. Try to delay or avoid answering them.

2.6**Communication activity**

Work in pairs. You will be getting information about the career of the Beatles. One of you should look at activity 40 while the other one looks at activity 109.



When you ask people questions, they often don't give you enough information right away. Then you have to ask them for additional information – you may want more details or you may not be satisfied with the answers they have given. Here are some techniques for getting the extra information that you want:

Could you tell me some more about ... ?

Would you mind telling me more about ... ?

I'd like to know more about ...

Something else I was wondering about was ...

Sorry, that's not really what I mean. What I'd like to know is ...

Sorry to keep after you, but could you tell me ... ?

Sorry, I don't quite understand why ...

Decide with your teacher when these expressions would be used and what might be said before and after.

2.8

Exercise

Get your teacher to give you as much information as possible on his or her:

education

favorite way of spending evenings

professional career so far

favorite way of spending weekends

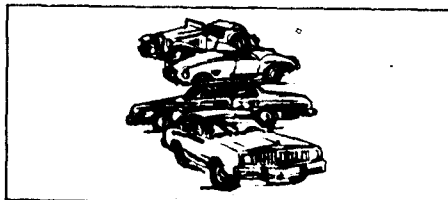
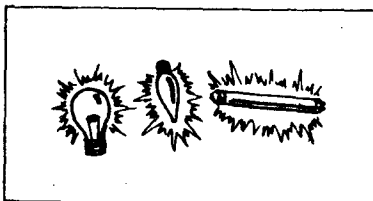
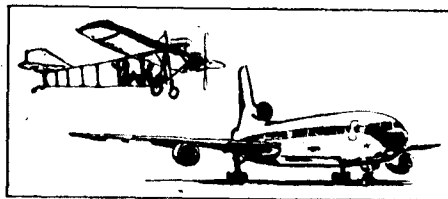
favorite vacation spot

Try to get as many details as you can.

2.9

Communication activity

Work in groups of four (or three). What do you know about the inventors of these common objects?



Each of you is an expert on one of them. Student A should look at activity 99, student B at activity 92, student C at activity 44, and student D at activity 8.