

Proficiency in the Use of English

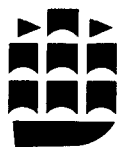


John Millington Ward

Proficiency in the Use of English

10 Lessons of Guidance and Practice

John Millington Ward



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About this book

Guidance and practice is given in the skills that are tested in the *Use of English* paper of the new examination for the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English. The book, however, does not stop there. Other skills are also practised. In each of its 10 Lessons, the 10 Sections follow this pattern:

A A passage with blank spaces. The student finds *one* suitable word for each blank space.

B Words from the passage, each one having at least one other meaning different from that in which it is used in the passage. The student uses them in sentences of his own to illustrate the other meanings.

C Questions about the passage, some of which are designed to practise the student's ability to understand more than ordinary straightforward meanings.

D Another passage with blank spaces, each of which is followed by three words in parentheses. In some cases, all three of these words can fill the spaces; in other cases, only two; in others, only one. The student chooses.

E Another passage with words or phrases printed in italics. The student removes these italicised items and uses some other word or construction that will give the same meaning *and* leave the sentence grammatically correct.

F Practice in advanced tense and grammar usage.

G Practice in the use of English.

H More practice in the use of English.

I Practice in the expression of a particular concept in a different way; e.g. the student rewrites a badly-written business letter, or he elaborates on an advertisement for a house that is for sale and so on.

J A picture-joke from *Punch Magazine*. The student explains it to a friend on the telephone.

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Lesson One

A Read through this passage and then fill each of the numbered blank spaces with **one** suitable word.

Two years ago, in November, when I was digging in the _____¹, I became aware of a robin following my activities closely. He was _____² unusually confiding that I set _____³ to cultivate his friendship. First I gave him small worms which he certainly appreciated; then, remembering Lord Grey's account of his _____⁵ tame robin in *The Charm of Birds*, I tried to _____⁴ meal-worms, but in vain. I compromised on maggots. They were an immediate success. Soon the robin followed me _____⁵ I went, and always after he had fed (usually on four or five maggots) he _____⁶ express his contentment with a burst of song. _____¹⁰

During the winter I would come down in the morning, open the front door and give a double-noted whistle to which he had grown _____⁷. At once he would fly up from the bottom of the garden, where apparently he roosted, come into the house through the open door on to my knee, and _____⁸ his _____¹⁵ rations. This _____⁹ all through the winter, which was an unusually mild one. Then, one day in early spring, I gave the _____¹⁰ signal and he flew up from the bottom of the garden, but stopped half-way in a rose bush, and I saw another robin follow him and alight in the same bush. He had acquired a _____²⁰ wife. After a short time he flew to the doorstep and paused again, looking back. The hen bird remained in the bush, and he _____¹¹ to her without response. He tried again, obviously inviting her to join him, but there was still no response, so he hopped into the house and on to my knee, and looked up at me with a most _____²⁵

comical _____¹², as if to say, 'You'll have to _____¹³ her, she's a bit shy.' Then he took two maggots and flew down to the rose bush. The hen saw him coming, and crouched down and quivered her wings in the manner of a young bird waiting to be fed. He gave her the maggots and _____¹⁴ the journey three 30 times before eating his _____¹⁵ ration.

(From *A Friendly and Intelligent Robin* by Harold Rigby)

B Here are 10 words from the passage. Each has at least one other meaning different from that in which it is used in the passage. Use them in sentences of your own to illustrate the other meanings.

follow l.2	set l.3	appreciate l.5
account l.5	charm l.6	vain l.7
express l.10	front l.12	spring l.17
one l.17		

C Here are some questions for you to answer about the passage.

- 1 Why do you think the maggots were an immediate success with the robin?
- 2 Why did the robin begin to follow the writer? l.7
- 3 The robin's way of expressing his contentment was with a burst of song. What contentment was this? l.8
- 4 Why does the writer use the word *ration*? l.14 and l.26
- 5 One day in early spring, the robin stopped half-way up the garden. Why?
- 6 Why did his wife take no notice of his calling?
- 7 Later, the robin seemed to be apologising to the writer for his wife's behaviour. Why do you think he found it *necessary* to apologise?

D The numbered blank spaces in this passage are followed by three words in parentheses. In some cases, all three of these words could fill the blank spaces; in other cases, only two could fill them; in other cases, only one. Make your choice.

A friend of _____¹ (*me/mine/myself*) from an eastern country _____² (*that/which/who*) suffers _____³ (*of/from/by*) terrible poverty of its own told me _____⁴ (*recently/before/lately*) of the

extra problems _____⁵ (*caused/brought/done*) by the continual arrival of long-haired young people with no money or _____⁶ (*works/work/jobs*), no _____⁷ (*purpose/ambition/intention*) in life, and _____⁸ (*apparently/seemingly/probably*) no soap. They wander _____⁹ (*about/approximately/around*) _____¹⁰ (*relying/depending/expecting*) on the good _____¹¹ (*nature/will/heart*) and charity of the local citizens. In Britain, _____¹² (*both/too/also*), we _____¹³ (*see/look/observe*) them all over the place with their matted hair and beards, their extraordinary and dirty clothes, their _____¹⁴ (*stripped/bare/naked*) feet, and we _____¹⁵ (*resent/sicken/dislike*) their unwashed and _____¹⁶ (*aromatic/malodorous/smelly*) presence.

_____¹⁷ (*Yet/Nevertheless/Even*) one feels that this is not just an affectation, or passing fashion. It is a _____¹⁸ (*form/sort/type*) of protest against the establishment, and against the superficial formalities of the civilised society in which we _____¹⁹ (*live/be/exist*). So is their _____²⁰ (*demand/insistence/desire*) for freedom to experiment with things which have dangerous possibilities.

E *In this passage, a number of words are printed in italics.*

Remove them from the passage, and then find some other way of giving the same meaning, with the passage remaining grammatically correct.

In some cases, you will be obliged to add other words, or remove other words, or change other words (which are not in italics), or you may be obliged to alter the whole grammatical construction of a sentence.

Example 1

'She **managed** to persuade her father to give his permission.'

Answer

'She **succeeded in persuading** her father to give his permission.'

(Note: we cannot change **managed** into **succeeded** unless we also change the infinitive **to persuade** into the '-ing form' (gerund) after the preposition **in: in persuading.**)

Example 2

'Her father **gave his permission.**'

Answer

'Her father **consented**.'

(Note here: the one word **consented** is the best replacement of all the three words we have to remove: **gave his permission**.)

Example 3

'These shoes are **too** small for me.'

Answer

'These shoes are **not big enough** for me.'

Note: These 3 examples serve as illustrations for all the other nine similar exercises in this book – E in each case.

It was¹ several years since I had helped at a jumble sale and I did not *look forward*² to the event with much enthusiasm.

'Wear old clothes,' my mother warned me. 'And *be sure*³ to be there early.'

When I arrived, the queue outside *was already*⁴ impatient. I slipped in through the side door and took my place behind one of the trestle tables.

'What a lot of rubbish!' I commented to the stout lady *next to*⁵ me. 'Surely no one will buy any of this?'

'Just wait and see,' she said, *with*⁶ a knowing smile, and as she spoke the doors opened. The people swarmed in *like*⁷ a swarm of bees, and arms shot in all directions as bargains were purchased and prices discussed.

'*How much*⁸ is this vase?' enquired a tall man, but before I was able to reply he had thrust two-and-a-half pence into my hand and put the vase into his carrier bag.

'Hold this mirror for me,' said an elderly lady. 'I want to make sure that this coat *suits*⁹ me before I buy it.'

In an incredibly *short time*¹⁰ everything disappeared, and soon all the shoppers were on their way home carrying their prizes. And somehow over fifty pounds had been raised for charity.

F Finish each of the incomplete sentences with a passive construction in such a way that they will give the same meaning as the sentences in italics above them.

Example 1

'They couldn't make the prisoner confess.'

'The prisoner . . .'

Answer

'The prisoner couldn't be made to confess.'

(Note that **to** is needed in the passive construction, although it is not used in the active.)

Example 2

'People say it was quite a success.'

'It . . .'

Answer

'It's said to have been quite a success.'

(Note that the **was** of the object clause is changed into its perfect infinitive **to have been** because it refers to a time that is earlier than that of the main verb **say**.)

- 1 *Aren't they ever going to bring us breakfast?*
Aren't we . . .
- 2 *We'd better invite the Watsons this time.*
The Watsons . . .
- 3 *Do your policemen wear those metal helmets in summer, too?*
Are . . .
- 4 *It surprises me that you decided to buy it after all.*
I . . .
- 5 *They are going to do the job now, while we wait.*
The job . . .
- 6 *What caused the trouble?*
What . . .
- 7 *They have had to offer a bigger reward.*
A bigger reward . . .
- 8 *A proverb says that the female of the species is more deadly than the male.*
The female . . .
- 9 *The radio says that the hijackers of the Dutch plane were shot dead by a policeman disguised as an airline steward.*
The hijackers . . .
- 10 *I ought to have left this food in the oven a little longer.*
This food . . .
- 11 *Didn't anyone tell them about it?*
Weren't . . .

- 12 *Has anybody sent for a doctor yet?*
Has a doctor . . .
- 13 *People expect that prices will go up again.*
Prices . . .
- 14 *He gave us a helping hand when we were in trouble.*
We . . .
- 15 *They might just be considering your case favourably. You shouldn't be so pessimistic.*
Your case . . .

G *Look at these 10 statements or expressions and say:*

- a *where or in what circumstances you would normally expect to hear or see them;*
b *what they mean.*

Example

NOTHING TO DECLARE

Answer

- a *At an airport or seaport*
b *'If you have nothing to declare to the Customs Officers, go through that door (or passage).'*

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1 NO ENTRY | 6 Say when |
| 2 HOUSE FULL | 7 Ready, steady, GO! |
| 3 THIS SIDE UP | 8 Cheers! |
| 4 GIVE WAY | 9 God bless you! |
| 5 NOT TO BE TAKEN | 10 Hold on, please |

H *Use the words which are in small capitals on the left in new sentences that are similar in meaning to those shown on the right.*

Example

HEAR *Has she written to you lately?*

Answer

Have you heard from her lately?

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1 SUBSTITUTE | We've decided to replace those red curtains with these blue ones. |
| 2 BORROW | My father is going to lend me the necessary money. |

- | | | |
|----|---------|---|
| 3 | INSIST | I must have your answer by tonight. |
| 4 | CHARGE | A steak costs two pounds in that restaurant. |
| 5 | ROB | Someone has stolen Janet's bracelet. |
| 6 | SHOW | It's two weeks since she fell down the stairs, but you can still see the bruises. |
| 7 | MUST | Surely you heard me calling? |
| 8 | DIE | His cancer eventually killed him. |
| 9 | NEED | It was not necessary for me to go there. |
| 10 | BELONG | The bank now owns this block of flats. |
| 11 | APPEAL | I don't like this kind of music. |
| 12 | INFORM | She reported the matter to her boss. |
| 13 | OCCUR | Have you thought of any solution yet? |
| 14 | TOO | He was speaking very quickly, and I couldn't understand. |
| 15 | DEPRIVE | The State took away his citizenship. |

I 'Commercialese' is a name given to a type of language that is frequently found in business letters (just as 'journalese' is the name of the type of language used by inferior newspapers). IT SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

Examples of objectionable expressions in 'commercialese' are: prox. (for next month); of even date (for of today); your esteemed favour (for your letter); as per (for in accordance with); I am in receipt of (for I have received); I beg to inform you; Kindly note; I/We hereby beg to say; The favour of an early reply will oblige; Assuring you of our best attention at all times, we beg to remain your obedient servant; etc.

The guiding principle in the writing of a business letter is that the language should be the same as it would be in a normal piece of prose, with an emphasis on brevity, clarity and simplicity.

As an example, imagine that someone has written to ask your company to send a sales representative to his office. You are replying to say that this will be done. Here are two replies: the first in objectionable 'commercialese'; the second in normal, good English.

Dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge that we are in receipt of your esteemed favour of the 29th inst., to hand. with thanks. We beg you to kindly note that one of our sales representatives Mr Robert Thompson by name, will be honoured to present himself to you at your offices on Thursday, 2nd. prox., at eleven o'clock in the forenoon.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times, and thanking you for your kind interest in our company,

I beg to remain, dear Sir,

Yours obediently,

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for your letter of October 29th.

Mr Robert Thompson will be very happy to call on you on Thursday, November 2nd., at 11 a.m.

Yours faithfully,

Here, now, is another letter written in objectionable 'commercialese'.
Rewrite it in normal, good English.

Regional Electricity Board

Norford District

Tel: Norford 1234

Market Place
Norford

Mrs. A.B.Elwell,
2 Down Street,
Norford.

21/10/74

Dear Madam,

In regard and further to your query in reference to the work carried out as per your request for the exchanging of your electric water heater and our subsequent statement of account in the sum of £5.75, I have looked closely into this proceeding and can find no inaccuracies in regard to labour or material commitments. As you may remember, there was a requirement for both an Electrician and a Plumber on site. However, taking into consideration all the circumstances, I am reducing the charge by 75p. I am sure that this will be a satisfactory solution to your complaint. I would therefore be obliged if you would settle this account in the sum of £5 by return.

Yours faithfully,
A. Burke
A. Burke,
Regional Engineer.

J Explain this joke to a friend on the telephone.



'You should have been firmer with him when he was a puppy!'

Lesson Two

A Read through this passage and then fill each of the numbered blank spaces with one suitable word.

There were only three of us left now; the others had been hanged over the ramparts, one every morning. Elxsente was still sick and we didn't know what to do with him; he was only a child, and cried for his mother at nights; some of the others had done that, and I would have, _____¹, but I was fifteen and had to _____² a good example. They used to take us out on to the walls, and whip us where the men from our own cities could _____³ us; of course they had the right to do it, but some of us weren't very old, and used to cry _____⁴ at the thought of it, which was very bad for everyone. But we could look out _____⁵ when we were taken up, and there was our camp, spread and shining below us; once there was an attack while we were there, and we all cheered, but the Romans paid us back in kicks for that. I saw the banner of Mireto from time to time, and thought I could _____⁶ out my father at the head of the spearmen, _____⁷ and my big brother with him; and once I saw a herald whom I knew, and called out to him, but he didn't hear me. Every day we hoped the town would _____⁸, though we should very _____⁹ have been killed before anyone could _____¹⁰ to us; still, it was a chance, and _____¹¹ than being dragged out and choked _____¹² dogs at the end of a rope. We knew our people were pressing hard and might soon starve the town out; for the last week they had given us nothing but water and a very little bread; the one who was chosen to be hanged every morning used to leave his _____¹³ of the bread to anyone he _____¹⁴

_____ ¹². There wasn't very much water. _____ ¹³; the
 _____ ¹⁴ day Tefre and I had given it all to Elxsente; we
 thought we should be able to eat his bread – he wouldn't touch it
 – but we were _____ ¹⁵ thirsty.

(From *The Hostages* by Naomi Mitchison)

B Here are 10 words from the passage. Each has at least one other meaning different from that in which it is used in the passage. Use them in sentences of your own to illustrate the other meanings.

hang l.1

used l.6

own l.7

right l.8

once l.12

cheer l.13

time l.14

call l.17

chance l.20

people l.22

C Here are some questions for you to answer about the passage.

- 1 Why do you think the Romans hanged one of the children over the ramparts every morning?
- 2 The writer says he had to set a good example. l.6 What does he mean?
- 3 He says 'they had the right to do it'. l.8 What was he referring to? And why did he think they had this right?
- 4 The children used to cry at the thought of the whippings, 'which was bad for everyone'. Why was it bad for everyone?
- 5 On the other hand, there *was* one good thing about the whippings. What was this?
- 6 What fact gave the children the idea and the hope that the town might soon fall?
- 7 They knew, however, that they might be killed before anyone could reach them. Why was this?

D The numbered blank spaces in this passage are followed by three words in parentheses. In some cases, all three of these words could fill the blank spaces; in other cases, only two could fill them; in other cases, only one. Make your choice.

One day recently I _____ ¹ (*happened/occurred/chanced*) to meet an old friend of mine, a _____ ² (*resigned/retired/departed*)