

Cambridge
First Certificate

Ideas

**Speaking and listening
activities for
upper-intermediate students**

Teacher's Book

Leo Jones



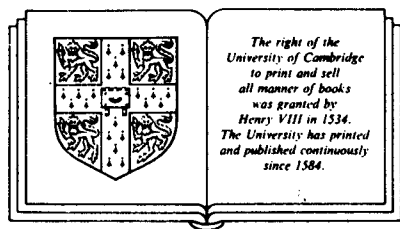
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Introduction


Ideas is a book of speaking and listening activities for upper-intermediate students. There are 22 units, each based on a different topic and within each unit there are five to eight student-centred activities, designed to stimulate students to share their ideas, opinions and experiences with each other. The topics are the ones which most upper-intermediate students need and want to talk about in English, and the activities themselves are realistic, interesting and often challenging.

English is a language that is spoken not just in Britain, but all over the world – often as a means of communication between people who have no other language in common. The activities in this book don't attempt to prepare learners for 'life in Britain' but for using English as an international language.

Ideas covers the kind of listening and speaking skills tested in papers 4 and 5 of the revised Cambridge First Certificate exam (1984). It is also designed to be used as the oral/aural component of any course which concentrates mainly on reading and writing skills. And, of course, it can also be used on its own as an intensive 'refresher course' for learners who need to develop their fluency in English.

Activities

In the speaking activities in *Ideas*, students work together in pairs or in groups. The aim is to encourage students to exchange ideas and opinions with each other. In each activity students are given a purpose or task – and this makes the activities much more motivating and realistic than just 'answering questions' or 'having a discussion'. The tasks involve filling in charts, solving problems or finding out information.

 Some of the activities in *Ideas* are called 'Communication activities'. Here learners are directed to separate sections at the back of the book, where each person is given different information and can't see the others' information. Their purpose then is to find out what their partners know and to tell them what they know. In this way an 'information gap' is created and bridged – and communication can take place.

In these activities each learner has a 'task' to perform and has to use the information he or she receives. Learners will find that they are

strongly motivated by the desire to receive, offer and exchange information and by the realism and value of the tasks themselves.

The Teacher's Book provides a brief description of each communication activity with a 'route map' so that teachers have an overview of what will happen in the activity. There is also a complete index of the communication activities at the end of the Teacher's Book. (Some of the communication activities are used as 'clues' to help students who are having difficulty with a problem-solving exercise.)

Listening exercises

Each unit in *Ideas* has one or two listening exercises, the recording for which is on the cassettes. There is a clearly distinct 'before', 'during' and 'after' phase to each listening exercise. A full procedure for each phase is given in the notes for each unit, but basically the phases are like this:

- 1 Pre-listening Learners find out their purpose in listening to the recording and any background information they may need. There is often also some preliminary discussion in which students talk together about their expectations and make predictions about what they are going to hear.
- 2 Listening Usually learners need to hear the recording at least twice: once to get used to the voices on the tape and to try to get the gist of the text; and second to find out and note down the specific points of information required by the task. These tasks may involve drawing a diagram, filling in a chart or making notes, for example. Time should be allowed for a third listening if necessary.
- 3 After listening Learners compare notes or answers with a partner and then discuss the topic, relating the information and ideas they have heard to their own knowledge and experience.

There are no 'comprehension questions' in the listening exercises: this is because in real life we don't ever have to answer such things. What we do have to do when we listen is gather information and then share it with others. This is the kind of skill the exercises in *Ideas* aim to foster. All the listening exercises therefore involve just as much talking as listening.

Working together

All of the activities in *Ideas* work best with learners working together in pairs or small groups. From time to time you may wish to vary this by getting the whole class to work together – not talking to 'the teacher' but to each other within the class.

The larger the class, the more these student-centred activities make sense, because:

- They give everyone a chance to speak.
 - They allow real conversations to develop – not just pieces of language practice.
 - They free learners from the fear of making mistakes or losing face.
- In other words, when learners are working together in small groups, they are able to *communicate* with each other and are not just practising English or answering questions.

Of course, it's true that they are more likely to make mistakes (see below) but it's far better for a whole class to be talking fluently, with some mistakes, than for them all to be listening to the teacher and answering questions one at a time in turn.

Vocabulary and useful language

The teacher's notes for each unit give lists of essential and useful vocabulary connected with the topic of the unit. From time to time you may want to introduce *some* of this vocabulary before your class begins an activity. Usually, however, you may prefer to 'feed in' any words that seem to be needed by learners who are in difficulty and can't find the right words to describe an idea or object.

The vocabulary in these lists is drawn from the *Cambridge English Lexicon* but supplemented by further useful words which may be needed to discuss the topics in more depth. Words given in brackets are the American English equivalents of some of the British English words given in the lists.

In many of the activities some useful language is suggested – lists of phrases and expressions that learners can use while they are doing the activity. The purpose of the useful language is:

- 1 To provide language items which may help learners to participate more effectively in the activity. There is no need for them to memorise the expressions or try to 'work them into the conversation' – the phrases are there for *support* if and when needed.
- 2 To partially guide the conversation by showing learners what they might say at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the activity.

The useful language sections do not contain exponents of any *one* particular function – each contains a range of expressions that students may find useful while participating in the activity.

Grammar and mistakes

Although accuracy is an important aspect of language learning and should never be ignored, it is far more important for learners to be able to *communicate* effectively. The activities in *Ideas* are 'task-orientated'

– learners are given a communicative task and their success (or failure) in performing this task will not necessarily depend on grammatical accuracy. These activities are related to the topic of each unit and require the use of a wide range of language skills. They provide essential ‘fluency practice’ – allowing learners to learn how to communicate by actually *using* English.

It is assumed that learners using *Ideas* will by this time have covered most of the basic grammar of English: there will still be some gaps in their knowledge, their memories may fail them sometimes and, of course, they will still make mistakes.

No learner should be (or even can be) corrected every time he or she makes a mistake. Indeed, if that happened, some students would become so ‘mistake-conscious’ that they would be afraid to speak at all! It must be realised that no one can learn a foreign language without making mistakes and that mistakes are actually an essential indicator of what learners still need to learn. On the basis of the mistakes you overhear, together with the questions you are asked, you can plan any remedial teaching your class may require. Two useful books to help you with this are *Notions in English* (CUP 1979) and *Use of English* (CUP 1984).

There is no point in attempting to ‘revise the whole of English grammar’ at an upper-intermediate level – not only might it be extremely boring, but it would involve wasting time on revising areas of grammar your learners are already familiar with. Specific difficulties can’t be predicted. It’s only when mistakes are made that you can see what the specific difficulties are – and *then* you should take action – but it is fruitless to try to anticipate all of these mistakes.

Written work

Although no written compositions are set in the Student’s Book, there are a variety of list-making and note-taking tasks, particularly in the listening exercises. Here in the Teacher’s Book, however, three suggestions for written work are given at the end of each unit. You may decide:

- a) to select one of these yourself and explain to the class what they should do or discuss the topic with them, or
- b) to allow your students to choose the written task they want to do after explaining the alternatives, or
- c) to disregard these suggestions if your class already have enough written work to do, or if they aren’t terribly interested in that particular unit.

In marking written work, try to maintain a balance between showing

the need for writing to be reasonably accurate and recognising a student's desire to communicate fairly complex ideas. Clearly, if your students are soon to take an exam like the First Certificate, then accuracy is important and attention should be given to improving writing skills up to the level of the exam. The suggestions for written work are based on the kind of tasks set in the FCE exam. There is full coverage of the skills needed for all five papers of FCE in *Progress Towards First Certificate* (CUP 1983).

How to use *Ideas*

Teachers and students are expected to *select* the activities in each unit that seem most relevant and interesting to them. The 22 units cover a wide range of topics and although it is not essential to do the units in sequence, the later ones are more difficult than the earlier ones. It is recommended that Unit 1 is done first of all, because it is a kind of introduction to the methods and techniques used throughout the book. The teaching notes for Unit 1 are also more detailed than the notes for later units.

The teacher's notes for each unit begin with lists of useful vocabulary (see **Vocabulary and useful language** above), followed by advice on how to handle each activity. These notes become less detailed in later units, on the assumption that teachers will have become more accustomed to the techniques used by then. Finally, there are recommended writing tasks as a written follow-up to the unit (see **Written work** above). The teacher's notes also contain solutions to the problems or tasks set in the Student's Book and complete transcripts of the listening exercises.

Hopefully, each teacher will use *Ideas* in his or her own way, adapting the material to the needs of each different group of learners. The teacher's notes are intended as helpful prompts and not as rigid instructions laid down by the author! *Ideas* is designed to stimulate learners and teachers alike, not to control them.

One unit may take from 1½ to 3 hours to work through, depending on:
how difficult a class finds the activities,
how much interest is generated,
and how many of the activities are selected.

The teacher's role

The teacher has three main things to do while *Ideas* is being used:

- 1 To get things started – making sure everyone knows what they have to do and possesses the necessary vocabulary to do it.
- 2 To monitor the groups at work and decide when to stop the activity.

- 3 To lead a short follow-up discussion after each activity – answering any queries, pointing out any significant mistakes and then doing any remedial work necessary.

It is wise to rearrange groups and pairs frequently: this will help to keep the class feeling fresh and receptive to different people's ideas. It may, however, sometimes be necessary to make sure that the more dominant learners who might intimidate the less confident ones are kept together in the same group. Similarly, the shyest ones may prosper best talking to each other while they gain confidence. You may have to be constantly compromising between offering variety and playing safe when arranging pairs and groups. And sometimes old friends may work better together as a pair than enemies would!

While using *Ideas* your learners will be participating in enjoyable speaking and listening activities. Their enjoyment may tempt them to lapse into their mother tongue from time to time. The only solution to this (apart from imposing fines or even harsher punishments!) is to convince every member of the class that he or she has a share in your common aim: to improve their English. Indeed, one of the main aims of the material offered in *Ideas* is to foster a spirit of co-operation and friendship in the class – you are a team with a common purpose and each member of the team has his or her part to play in the success of the course.

Don't worry if the occasional activity seems to misfire or fails to 'take off' with a particular class. Open-ended exercises of this type are inherently unpredictable. Indeed, it was found during the piloting of *Ideas* that several activities which seemed to fall flat in one class went like a bomb in others. So, bear in mind the attitudes and prejudices of your class when you're selecting the activities you're going to do, and be prepared to 'sell' the idea of an activity to them if you believe it to be a particularly worthwhile one. Some activities are 'easier' than others, but this may not depend on the nature of the activity itself or the level of English required, so much as on the imaginations, opinions, experience, versatility and knowledge of the participants themselves. Above all, though, the activities are designed to be *enjoyable* – because students who are enjoying their course are still eager to continue improving their English and are receptive to new ideas.

1 • You and me

This unit introduces the methods used throughout the book: students will be working in pairs or in groups sharing ideas, opinions and feelings – above all they will be working together. The emphasis in this unit is on the positive side of things – people's strong points, not their weak points; their achievements, not their failures. This doesn't mean that no one is allowed to mention things they hate or things which annoy them – students should be free to say what they feel like saying – but while doing this unit they should be looking at each other as team-mates, not as rivals.

Try to make sure during this unit that students change partners as much as possible for each of the activities. This will help them to get to know each other better. Note that most of the activities in this unit require students to work together in pairs: in other units the changes are rung and many activities will work best with groups of 3, 4 or more.

If possible, record as many students as you can on a portable cassette recorder so that you can analyse what gaps there are in their knowledge and what aspects of their spoken English need attention. You will, in any case, need a cassette recorder for the listening exercise and perhaps for the 'soft background music' suggested in part 4 of that activity. It might be a good idea to **make notes** on each student's spoken English, even if you don't record everyone. Your notes might take this form:

Student's name:

GRAMMAR POINTS:

VOCABULARY:

PRONUNCIATION POINTS:

There are no vocabulary lists for this unit – students should be encouraged to use the language they know already to express their ideas. There is however a vocabulary-building activity entitled 'Nice people' in this unit. Of course, if questions are asked and specific vocabulary items are requested, you should provide the words students need.

I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY ASKING



IN PAIRS

This activity is designed to help everyone to get to know each other better. The actual listening exercise (phases 1 to 3) should take less time than the rest of the activity (phases 4 and 5).

- 1 Before you play the recording, allow each pair time to discuss what answers they would themselves give to the questions in the table. One 'pair' may have to be a group of 3 if you have an odd number in the class.
- 2 Be prepared to play the recording at least twice through if your students are likely to find it difficult to understand people speaking at normal speed in English. The first time through they can just listen to get used to the voices and to try to get the gist of what the people are saying. The second time through they can make notes on what is said. These notes should just be a few words to help them to remember what was said.

Here are model answers to the listening task:

	First speaker	Second speaker	Third speaker
What do you enjoy most in life?	A nice meal	Reading a book in front of a fire	His work
What is your greatest ambition?	To go to Indonesia	To have enough money	To go on a safari in East Africa
What has been your greatest achievement?	Getting to Oxford	Having her daughter	Raising 3 daughters
Which person do you admire most?	Winston Churchill	Gandhi	His wife
Who do you get on with best of all?	His wife	Her daughter	His wife
What was the nicest thing that happened to you yesterday?	Daughter said he was wonderful	Went for a nice walk	Went for a drive in the country

- 3 Allow each pair time to compare their notes and then to assess the personality of each speaker.
- 4 For this part of the activity a cassette of some nice relaxing background music (orchestral or instrumental) might be useful. Play this music while the first pairs ask each other the questions from the list on the right of the page in the Student's Book. After 45 to 60 seconds stop the music and get everyone to change partners and,

when the music starts again, continue asking questions from the place they had got to in the list. Keep on stopping the music and getting everyone to change partners until they have all had a chance to talk to most of their class-mates. The music will help to conceal any embarrassing silences and act as a gentle cue for changing partners.

- 5 Make a clear signal (or stop the music again) and tell everyone to change partners yet again. This time they should concentrate on asking only the questions which they found most revealing or interesting. Encourage them to give more detailed answers this time.

At the very end, find out what everyone thought of this activity – or move straight on to the next page where students start to explore each other's personalities in greater depth!

Transcript

Your students shouldn't expect to be able to understand every single word that's spoken in this (or any other) listening text. All they should aim to do is to pick out the main points of information, which in this case are simply the answers to the questions that the interviewer asks. The transcripts are given in the Teacher's Book only so that you, the teacher, know what's going to be said and can 'handle' the exercise more efficiently. Students do not need to see these transcripts, and in fact it might be both time-consuming and confusing for them if they did.

- Interviewer: Excuse me . . . er . . . could I ask you a few questions?
 First passer-by: Certainly, yes.
 Interviewer: Um . . . pl . . . could you tell me what you enjoy most in life?
 First passer-by: What I enjoy most in life? I think I enjoy . . . um . . . a nice meal.
 Interviewer: Mmm and what do you think's been your . . . or would be your greatest ambition?
 First passer-by: My greatest ambition would be to go to Indonesia and see the wonderful arts and dances and musics of that country.
 Interviewer: Oh yes, fascinating. Er . . . what's been your greatest achievement so far?
 First passer-by: My greatest achievement, well far be it from me to say but . . . um . . . I think that . . . er . . . I go back to the time that I got to Oxford. I was very very proud of . . . of . . . of finding myself at such a wonderful, hallowed . . . er . . . university of learning.
 Interviewer: Yes, I'm sure you were. What person do you admire most?
 First passer-by: Um . . . Winston Churchill.
 Interviewer: Mmm, and who do you get on with best of all?
 First passer-by: My wife.

- Interviewer: Oh . . . what was the nicest thing that happened to you yesterday?
- First passer-by: Yesterday . . . gosh, I must say my memory . . . isn't it awful . . . er . . . oh yes, my little girl came up to me first thing in the morning and she said, 'Daddy, you're the most wonderful person in the world.'
- Interviewer: Ha ha. Thank you very much.
- First passer-by: Thank you.
- Interviewer: Excuse me, could I ask you a few questions?
- Second passer-by: Oh . . . yes, all right.
- Interviewer: The first one is: What do you enjoy most in life?
- Second passer-by: Um . . . well, I . . . I'm sorry to be boring but . . . er . . . I really enjoy sitting in front of a fire and just reading by myself.
- Interviewer: That's lovely, isn't it? Yes and what's your greatest ambition?
- Second passer-by: Um . . . er . . . to have as much money as possible. I don't mean to be enormously rich but to be . . . have enough not to have to worry.
- Interviewer: Oh yes, and what do you think's been your greatest achievement?
- Second passer-by: Oh, having my daughter. I've got one little girl and it's her.
- Interviewer: Oh, lovely. Which person do you admire most?
- Second passer-by: Oh . . . er . . . um . . . well either something quite frivolous like . . . like an actor, like Laurence Olivier or . . . No, really somebody like . . . er . . . Mahatma Gandhi, I think.
- Interviewer: Oh yes. And who do you get on with best of all?
- Second passer-by: Oh, my daughter – she's awfully nice to me, ha ha.
- Interviewer: Ha ha, lovely. What was the nicest thing that happened to you yesterday?
- Second passer-by: Well . . . um . . . we went out for a very nice walk and . . . and saw a castle and it was just lovely, the whole day.
- Interviewer: Oh, it sounds super! Thank you very much.
- Second passer-by: Thank you.
- Interviewer: Excuse me . . . er . . . can I interrupt you for a moment?
- Third passer-by: Oh, yeah.
- Interviewer: Would you mind answering a few questions? The f . . . the first one is: What do you enjoy most in life?
- Third passer-by: Oh well, I think I enjoy my work most.
- Interviewer: Mmm . . . and what's your greatest ambition?
- Third passer-by: Greatest ambition. I think that would be to go on a safari in East Africa.
- Interviewer: Oh, that sounds wonderful. What's been your greatest achievement?
- Third passer-by: Well, I guess raising three daughters.
- Interviewer: Uhuh. Which person do you admire most?
- Third passer-by: Mmm . . . I'd better say my wife! Ha ha.
- Interviewer: And who do you get on with best of all?

Third passer-by: Well, I . . . I'm sure: my wife.

Interviewer: Again, your wife. And what was the nicest thing that happened to you yesterday?

Third passer-by: Yesterday. . . . Oh yes, yesterday was Sunday and we went for . . . um . . . a drive out in the country and I think that was just wonderful.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Thank you, goodbye.

Third passer-by: Bye.

(Time: 3 minutes 25 seconds)

WHAT KIND OF PERSON ARE YOU?

IN PAIRS

Whenever the recommended group size is given in these notes ('In pairs' or 'In groups of . . .') you may need to adjust the size to accommodate all of your students. For example, only sometimes does a class contain an even number of students, which means that there is often an odd man or woman out who needs to be made part of a group of 3 – or be *your* partner. In this unit, however, the latter course of action would be unwise, since you'll need all the time you can get to monitor what's going on and to make notes on your students' performance. So, whenever it says 'In pairs', this means that you can decide to have at least one group of 3 instead, with two members of the group sharing a role or sharing information.

If any of the questions in the questionnaire are embarrassing or worrying for anyone, point out the escape clause of [4] 'I'm not really sure'. Try to ensure that the activity ends on a positive note, not a negative one, by getting everyone to finish the activity with the one wish they would love to come true. This may make it necessary to leave out the middle of the activity.

Point out that the useful language included is there for support if they need it – to be used as required and not to be memorised and injected into every sentence!

MOODS

IN PAIRS

New pairs again here! At the end of the activity, the pairs could be combined into groups of 4 so that they can exchange their ideas on words to describe the girl's moods. The more personal questions at the end should perhaps be dealt with in pairs if the members of the class don't know each other very well yet.

NICE PEOPLE

IN PAIRS

Encourage students to ask each other the meaning of the words they don't know or to use a dictionary, rather than calling on you for help. Remind them that they are more likely to remember vocabulary they have found out for themselves than vocabulary you explain to them. This activity continues the theme of seeing people's qualities and not focussing on their faults.

WORKING TOGETHER

IN PAIRS

Draw everyone's attention to the purpose of this activity: working as a team to solve the problems by discussion, not working as two silent individuals. In fact, if a pair really can't make head or tail of one of the problems, they should ask another pair for a clue or even for a quick explanation. They shouldn't expect you to provide the right answers automatically – in fact even if only one pair has the right answer to a problem it's *they* who should tell everyone the solution, not you. Allow a reasonable amount of time for each problem to be worked on, before getting everyone to change partners and attempt the next. It doesn't matter if some pairs have already started the next problem before they change.

Here are the solutions to the problems that don't have immediately obvious answers:

- 2 (Make sure everyone notices the equipment piled on the roof of the Morris Minor!) The couple are in training for a two-year, 2,000-mile trip across Africa but have got stuck in the mud before leaving England.