


Help Yourself to Advanced English

高级英语自学系列教程

English in Current Affairs

A hand is pointing at a globe that shows North America, including Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The globe is tilted, and the hand is positioned over the United States. The text "English in Current Affairs" is written in a large, white, serif font, arching over the globe.

高级时事英语

顾曰国 主编

Gu Yueguo (chief editor)

外语教学与研究出版社

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(京)新登字 155 号

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

高级时事英语 = English in Current Affairs/顾曰国编著. - 北京:外语教学与研究出版社, 1997.3
“专升本”高级英语自学系列教程

ISBN 7-5600-1244-2

I. 高… II. 顾… III. 英语-电视大学-教材 IV. H31

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(97)第 06343 号

高级时事英语

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外语教学与研究出版社出版发行

(北京西三环北路 19 号 100089)

<http://www.fltrp.com.cn>

北京大学印刷厂印刷

开本 787×1092 1/16 31.5 印张

1997 年 4 月第 1 版

2000 年 1 月第 2 版 2002 年 10 月第 8 次印刷

印数: 38001—49000 册

* * *

ISBN 7-5600-1244-2

G·524

定价: 34.90 元

如有印刷、装订质量问题出版社负责调换

制售盗版必究 举报查实奖励 (010)68917826

版权保护办公室举报电话: (010)68917519

Help Yourself to Advanced English

高级英语自学系列教程

Help Yourself to Advanced English is a series specially designed for those self-study learners who want to upgrade their English from intermediate to advanced levels. It is thematically structured and five-skill integrated on activity/task basis. It consists of two modules: English Language Communication Module and Professional Training Module. Module 1 caters for general learners of English, and Module 2 provides up-to-date professional training for teachers of English.

English Language Communication Module:

A Guide to Success 1: Orientation

English in Daily Life

English at Leisure

English at Work

English in Current Affairs

A Guide to Success 2: Learning Strategies

English for Studying

Cross-cultural Communication

English in a Changing World

English Through Literature

Professional Training Module:

A Guide to Success 3: Professionalism

Language and Linguistics: A Workbook

English Language Teaching Methodology (1)

English Language Teaching Methodology (2)

Practical Project Design

Print materials are supplemented with both audio and video cassettes.

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The writing team wishes to express its uttermost gratitude to the Ministry of Education, the BC/ODA, Foreign Language Teaching & Research Press, and China Central Radio & Television University for their generous support of the project.

The First Year Pack

Checklist

Materials Provided:

version available for Autumn Semester

- ◆ *A Guide to Success 1*
- ◆ *English in Daily Life*
with audio cassettes
- ◆ *English at Leisure*
with audio cassettes

version available for Spring Semester

- ◆ *English at Work*
with audio cassettes
- ◆ *English in Current Affairs*
with audio cassettes

Materials Students Should Provide Themselves:

- ◆ 2 assignment notebooks (standard A4 size recommended)
- ◆ 1 rough notebook
- ◆ 1 self-assessment record notebook
- ◆ 2 blank cassettes for speaking practice



What's this book?

It's part of *Help Yourself to a BA Course* series. It's your fourth course in your first year study.



What's it about?

The units in this course include more reading and writing practice than courses 1 to 3. In addition, you are exposed to still more examples of neutral and formal (especially newspaper) style so that you develop the skills necessary for understanding the sort of complex texts you may meet in international publications. Your speaking and listening skills continue to be reinforced.

Since newspapers and magazines, etc. , provide the main source of current affairs information for most people, the first unit acts as an introduction to various types of English Language media. The other units of the course aim to cover the major areas of topical interest so that, at the end of this course, you should be able to read about and discuss a range of current issues.



How long does it take to finish this course?

Eight weeks. You must work very hard, though.



If I have to work so hard, do I earn any credits at the end?

Yes. Your hard work will be richly rewarded. You'll earn 4.5 credits !!!



How to Study This Course

Welcome to *English in Current Affairs*. This course is designed to enhance your ability in reading media English, i.e. the variety of English used typically in newspapers and radio programmes. As we did with the previous courses, let us first check if you have all the resources available.

Resources Checklist

The Materials You Should Have

Have You Got Them?

- There is **an audio cassette** accompanying the book. It is for listening tasks. And all the listening tasks are integrated with the other tasks of the book. It is therefore absolutely essential that you should have it.
- For each unit there is **a supplementary listening material**. It is included in the Appendix. This extra listening material is also recorded, and is to be found in the supplementary listening cassette. If you feel that your listening competence needs some more training, you are advised to listen to this supplementary material.
- There are also **some video programmes** accompanying the book. They show some authentic clips of media activities. You are not expected to buy them, of course, but you should watch them in the tutorial centre.
- You should have **a cassette recorder**. It is useful for self-recording.
- You should have at least **one notebook**.

English in Current Affairs

- You should at least buy yourself a **notebook**.

You have the resources now. They will remain wasted if you fail to use them wisely.

English in Current Affairs

As pointed out above, *English in Current Affairs* covers the variety of English used in mass media. One of the distinctive features of media is topical, that is, what media attempt to capture is what is happening at the time of reporting. Today's news is tomorrow's cliché. This feature puts some serious constraints on the selection of topics. Since we cannot update our textbooks as quickly as we update our news, we have to focus on those which catch readers' longer interest. Apart from Unit 1, which gives you a brief introduction to mass media in general, the other 7 units embrace such issues as (1) cultural differences and similarities, the understanding of which is crucial to the international cooperation among nations of diverse cultural backgrounds; (2) educational problems; (3) social and economical development; (4) environmental concerns; (5) social problems; (6) equality and (7) information highway.

Also included at the end of each unit are some texts to supplement those in the body of the unit. They can be read for individual study purposes or they can be used in your tutorials to form the basis of group discussions.

Emphasis on skills in using English and on reading in particular

Like *English at Work*, *English in Current Affairs* shifts the focus from on listening and speaking onto reading. In comparison with the written English you met in *English at Work*, it is more formal. You are often required to read, think, and reproduce by writing or speaking.

As pointed out above, mass media English is topical, and hence you must not read the book for your everyday news. What we hope to achieve is to provide you with some training in how to read mass media English. In the supplementary reading attached to each unit, we have added an extra feature: For each text there is a pre-reading question for you to answer by reading the text as quickly as you can for the first time. These questions usually ask for the main gist of the text. You will also find a standard reading exercise, which you can use for individual study with these texts or with any other that you read. We encourage you to find further articles and bring the ones you find most interesting and useful to your tutorials. After the text there are discussion questions, which mostly have no feedback provided, as they are designed for group discussion in your tutorials.

The texts have been chosen for their relevance to the topic of the unit. The language has not been simplified or changed and the original words and idioms have been left unaltered. For this reason a glossary has been provided with explanations of some words, phrases, or cultural references, in English. Some words have not been explained, because it was felt that they could easily be worked out from the context.

Where possible, you should always try and work out the meaning of the words yourself. This is an important skill that you need to develop for improving your English.

The spelling of the original article has been left the same, so you will find American spelling in the articles of American origin, and British spelling in the articles of British origin.

In order for you to bring the standard of your English up to the required BA level, you need to read extensively. This will help you increase your vocabulary and your understanding of idiomatic expression. The purpose of this course is to prepare and

English in Current Affairs

encourage you to read widely and express your knowledge and ideas in English on a wide variety of topics.

The Organization of the Book

There are altogether 8 units with 39 activities which in turn are made up of 243 tasks. On top of these, each unit has a warm-up task, and supplementary listening and reading tasks. So you will have 267 tasks in all. As we did with the previous courses, let's do some simple calculation together. Suppose that you spend 10 hours a week on the course. So you have 80 hours which are equal to 4800 minutes, to be divided by 267 tasks. It takes an average of 14 minutes to finish a task.

We can do another simple calculation. You have 56 days to finish 267 tasks. In average you have to finish 4-5 tasks a day. Since it takes 14 minutes to finish a task, you need 56-70 minutes, which are less than 2 hours a day.

Now can you spare 56-70 minutes a day? Don't tell me that you cannot. But let's take no chances. Let's plan our study carefully.

An 8-week Planner

(If you have already done so during your study of *A Guide to Success I: Orientation*, skip this.)

I know you are very busy, like everybody else. It is essential that you prioritize your time very well. **It takes 8 weeks to finish this course.** The first step, therefore, is to draw an 8-week planner. Your planner may look like this:

course	study weeks	calendar week	tasks	tutorial	hours p.w.
<i>English in Current Affairs</i>	3		U1		10
	4		U2		
	5		U3		
	6		U4		
	7		U5		
	8		U6		
	9		U7		
	10		U8		
Semester Exam					

A Weekly Planner

(If you have already done so during your study of *A Guide to Success 1: Orientation*, skip this.)

The next thing you should do is to draw a weekly planner. Your planner may look like this.

English in Current Affairs

Monday

6.30 get up
7.00-7.30 breakfast
8.00-12.00
12.00-2.00 lunch break
2.00-6.00
6.00-7.30 dinner
7.30-10.00
10.30 bed time

An hour a day on distance learning

Tuesday

6.30 get up
7.00-7.30 breakfast
8.00-12.00
12.00-2.00 lunch break
2.00-6.00
6.00-7.30 dinner
7.30-10.00
10.30 bed time

An hour a day on distance learning

Wednesday

6.30 get up
7.00-7.30 breakfast
8.00-12.00
12.00-2.00 lunch break
2.00-6.00
6.00-7.30 dinner
7.30-10.00
10.30 bed time

An hour a day on distance learning

Thursday

6.30 get up
7.00-7.30 breakfast
8.00-12.00
12.00-2.00 lunch break
2.00-6.00
6.00-7.30 dinner
7.30-10.00
10.30 bed time

An hour a day on distance learning

Friday

6.30 get up
7.00-7.30 breakfast
8.00-12.00
12.00-2.00 lunch break
2.00-6.00
6.00-7.30 dinner
7.30-10.00
10.30 bed time

An hour a day on distance learning

Saturday

6.30 get up
7.00-7.30 breakfast
8.00-12.00
12.00-2.00 lunch break
2.00-6.00
6.00-7.30 dinner
7.30-10.00
10.30 bed time

A distance learning day!!!

Sunday

6.30 get up
7.00-7.30 breakfast
8.00-12.00
12.00-2.00 lunch break
2.00-6.00
6.00-7.30 dinner
7.30-10.00
10.30 bed time

Half a day on distance learning!

The two planners are effective means for self-discipline and self-management.

This Message Again: Self-discipline and Self-management

The three trial years (from 1996 to 1998) with over 1200 students all over China bear the evidence that self-discipline and self-management are among the most important factors that make a successful distance learner. Apart from making planners such as those above, another feature of self-discipline and self-management is to monitor your own learning process. In *A Guide to Success 2: Learning Strategies*, we shall talk about it in more detail. A quick note will do here. Probably you have already realized that all the tasks are headed by instructions on how to do them, and some even have the first one done for you as an example. Learning tips and strategies are occasionally also built into the instructions or feedback. As it is recommended above, you read the instructions carefully, and do the tasks as quickly as you can, while marking those which you find challenging or difficult. Then you spend your review time on the marked ones. **Marking the hard ones and going back to them** constitute a way of monitoring your own learning. I hope you will have the will of doing it, not just one week, but week after week, until you reach the end of the course.

A Final Note

All the texts included are written by journalists. Although they may do their best to be neutral with what they are reporting, neutrality remains an ideal. No one can be 100 percent neutral. They are bound to have some bias towards some certain values or ideologies. You should read the texts critically!

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unit	topic	activities	functions
1	The Media	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *requesting/giving info *describing news events *commenting on news event *describing major sources of news in English
2	The Cultural Differences and Similarities	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *describing differences *explaining reasons *comparing *agreeing/disagreeing *reporting current events
3	Education	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *opening a formal conversation/interview *agreeing/disagreeing *describing problems *expressing concern *asking for/expressing opinions *describing a formative experience
4	Development	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *arguing for/against *agreeing/disagreeing *denying/disputing *describing trends/patterns/tendencies *describing processes of change *expressing possibility/probability/certainty

Contents

language points	performance objectives	pages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *past simple *basic Wh. Qs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *talking/asking about major sources of news *finding their way around newspapers and mags *identifying newspaper sections *recognising/responding to major layout /style conventions *reading/responding to/asking about news events 	1-61
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *present perfect *present simple *but/while/whereas *tend to/are inclined to *cause/effect *text organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *interpreting news headlines *identifying/describing cultural characteristics/tendencies *identifying comparing cultural characteristics/tendencies *suggesting/explaining reasons for tendencies 	65-130
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *present passive (for classifying) *topic sentences *past simple *cause/effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *describing education systems *describing a formative experience *discussing educational problems *suggesting solutions *writing a formal letter of comment to a newspaper *comparing traditional/modern systems 	131-184
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *enumeration markers *tend to/be inclined to *proportion/percentage *present perfect *present continuous *might/may/could/should 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *describing current situations *describing development trends *describing changes *talking/asking about future patterns *arguing a case for/against *summarising an article 	185-240

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unit	topic	activities	functions
5	Our Environment	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *describing problems *offering solutions *predicting *accusing/blaming *criticising *denying *responding to blame/criticism *expressing concern
6	Social Problems	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *identifying problems *describing problems *predicting *assumption/conjecture *rephrasing/clarifying *expressing doubt *judging/evaluating *showing tolerance
7	Equality	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *describing roles *giving examples *commenting on behaviour *explaining/justifying tendencies *comparing & contrasting *highlighting injustices/inequalities *giving advice
8	Information Highway	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *identifying functions *exchanging information *reaching conclusions *presenting an argument *organizing an argument