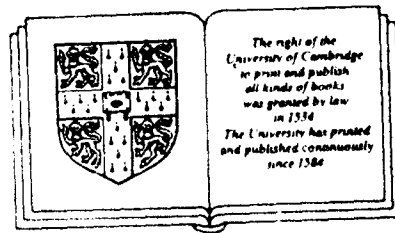


# Functions of American English

Communication activities  
for the classroom

Teacher's Manual

*Leo Jones*  
*C. von Baeyer*



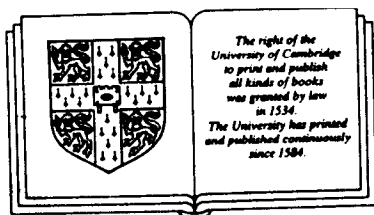
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# Introduction to the teacher

*Functions of American English* is for high intermediate and advanced learners, and is organized on *functional* lines. This introduction outlines the benefits of using a functional approach (sometimes called a *communicative* or *notional* approach) and then describes the way the functional material is organized in this course. Your students will be reading a shortened version of the notes that follow before they begin unit 1. In places where they do not fully understand, you may wish to give them additional information.

## Who needs Functions of American English?

Most high intermediate and advanced students have spent a lot of time learning basic English grammar and have a good knowledge of everyday vocabulary. But time and again, students have found that knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is not enough to make an effective speaker of English in the world outside the classroom. It is also essential to learn how to *do* things with language – how to use words and structures to do the things we want to do, whether it is to persuade a friend to do something, to describe a machine to a group of people, or whatever.

For students to acquire this *communicative competence* they must learn more than just grammar and vocabulary. They must learn which structures are *appropriate* to the situation they are in and the people they are with. They must learn to use a range of expressions (some of which they already know, some of which are new) that are commonly used to agree, to complain, to discuss the future, and so on. They must learn to conduct conversations – beginnings, middles, and endings – that are fluent and natural.

The functional approach provides a means of organizing all the material that must be mastered before a person can be said to have “learned a language.” The approach involves isolating certain *language functions*, such as “asking for information” (unit 2), “refusing to do something” (unit 3), “giving an opinion” (unit 8), and so on. These functions are then learned by practicing them in a variety of everyday situations. Each situation involves common *roles* (friend, stranger, employee, customer), typical *settings* (on a plane, at a party, at a meeting), and likely *topics* (business, travel, sport).

The emphasis is on developing *fluency* – giving students lots of practice in dealing with frequently encountered functions and situations. Any student who intends to *use* the language can benefit.

## What good is the functional approach?

The functional approach does not *replace* traditional language teaching – it adds a new dimension to it. Grammar and vocabulary must still be learned – students must know how to use future verb forms before they can talk about the future in true-to-life situations that involve making predictions and stating intentions (as in unit 6). In addition, grammar and vocabulary should certainly be reviewed in the usual way when their use in activities shows that they have not been mastered. But grammar and vocabulary are now simply the *tools* needed to communicate naturally in speaking and in writing. The aim is clearly communication – first in class and then outside it.

The specific goal of this approach is to get students in class to engage in communication that is as close as possible to the “real thing.” This goal is achieved by special emphasis on two principles:

- Students must be involved in as many situations as possible where one of them has some information and another one doesn’t but has to get it. Such situations are said to contain an *information gap* between the participants – in the traditional classroom situation, students are often told information that they already know, and this is not realistic. The communication activities (described on p. 8) were specially designed to create such information gaps.
- Students must be involved in as many situations as possible where they must *choose* from a variety of expressions. Several different ways of putting a function into words must be learned – there is never just one way of achieving a goal with language. Students may settle on favorite expressions, but they must also understand many different ways of expressing a particular function. The lists of expressions in the presentation sections in every unit (described later) provide many opportunities for such choices by the students.

## What does the teacher do in *Functions of American English*?


The materials encourage a very active approach to language practice. There are many different types of exercises and activities that stimulate a lot of talking and will often be amusing. These will increase the confidence of students and improve their accuracy in conversation. Students are often asked to play different roles, and it is only fair that you the teacher should sometimes join in. Playing a *role* does not demand any acting skill or funny clothes and voices – it *just* requires setting the scene carefully to make the situation believable.

As with any textbook, you will find that there are things you want to leave out and things you want to put in – any adaptation of the material to suit the needs and interests of your class will make the book more functional! The questionnaire in unit 1 is a good starting point for finding out from your students what their needs, interests, and expectations really are.

*Functions of American English* will help improve students’ listening, speaking, and writing skills, but your class may need further work in reading as well as supplementary work in listening comprehension. Such extra material is best chosen by the individual teacher to suit the needs and interests of the class.

# Organization of the materials

## Overall plan

The Student's Book and Teacher's Manual each consists of an introduction and fifteen units – the Student's Book contains the lesson material and 153 communication activities, and the Teacher's Manual contains teacher's notes with additional suggestions. The numbering of sections in the two books is the same for easy reference. A cassette tape completes the course material – it contains all the conversations, presentations, and pattern conversations. (These sections are identified by the sign  in the Student's Book and Teacher's Manual.)

## Length of the course

Each of the fifteen units might take three to four periods of 45–50 minutes each to cover. So the whole course could be completed in forty-five to sixty periods, depending on how much extra time is spent on such things as the sections of most interest to the class, remedial language work, and the written work sections. Students are encouraged to ask for more (or less) time on activities they feel are more (or less) relevant to their needs.

It is recommended that work with *Functions of American English* be interspersed with work on other sorts of materials appropriate to your students' needs, such as additional grammar and vocabulary as well as reading and listening materials.

## Format of each unit

Each unit in the two books is divided into several sections:

---

### *Unit title*

The title of each unit consists of the major functions that are focused on. There are usually three of them (see Contents).

### *Functional objectives* (only in Teacher's Manual)

A short statement is given of the abilities that students will focus on in that unit. These objectives should be outlined to your students before the unit is done in terms that they can relate to – by referring to their own jobs, interests, and needs, for example. It is also essential to assess the achievement of these objectives while working on a unit and to ask the students if they feel they have achieved them by the end of the unit. A simple question like *What do you think you've learned from this unit?* might be a suitable way of finding out.

### *Presupposed knowledge* (only in Teacher's Manual)

Not every unit has a presupposed knowledge section, but where there is one it gives a brief list of essential grammatical structures needed to perform the language functions in that unit. If a short assessment of your students' knowledge shows that they cannot use these structures, they will need preliminary review and practice before starting the unit, perhaps a book like:



Danielson, D. & R. Hayden. *Using English: Your Second Language*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.

Frank, Marcella. *Modern English: A Practical Reference Guide and Exercises for Non-Native Speakers (Part I – Parts of Speech and Part II – Sentences and Complex Structures)*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Krohn, Robert. *English Sentence Structure*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971.

Rutherford, William. *Modern English, Vols. 1 and 2*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.

For teachers who do not mind adapting materials from British English texts, the following two texts have grammar exercises suitable for use with *Functions of American English*:

Jones, Leo. *Notions in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

O'Neill, R. *English in Situations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

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### Conversation

#### Content

Each unit begins with a conversation that was recorded in everyday language, with all its hesitations and false starts. This is *not* a "dialogue" that the student should memorize. The conversation presents a performance in a typical situation of the functions focused on in the unit. In this way, students are introduced to some of the expressions that are used to carry out the functions, and they can see how the expressions are used by native speakers of English in a real conversation.

The situations involve two or three people at a time. The same six characters keep appearing in the situations, so the class will become familiar with them as real people:

Bob and Mary Graham – He works in an office, she at home.

John Spencer – He installs telephones but can't cook.

Anne Kennedy – She works in a trust company and likes John.

Sue Brown – She does photography and doesn't like violence on TV.

Ken Davis – He drives a big car and likes to smoke.

#### Procedure

A good way to use the conversations on tape is as follows:

- 1 Describe to the students the characters and the situation they are in, as given in the teacher's notes for each conversation. Play the entire conversation once or twice, and then ask general comprehension and summary questions. In later units, you may want to have the students guess the characters and situation after the first play-through, instead of telling them this information at the beginning. Discuss the relationship between the speakers.
- 2 Play the conversation, stopping it frequently before a speaker has finished, and ask: *What's he or she going to say next?* This will help to train students to *predict* or *anticipate* what people are going to say – an essential skill in understanding spoken English.

- 3 Play the conversation and ask the students to spot examples of the language functions being performed. Get them to mark these in their books. Discuss the effect of each example on the listener.
- 4 Discuss with the class any observations or problems arising from the conversation.

*Giving more examples*

The conversations can display only a few of the expressions that are presented in each unit, so you may have to give additional examples of your own to demonstrate the use of other expressions that you decide to present later on (see description of presentation sections that follows).

*Variety*

It is a good idea to use a variety of procedures with the conversations. Play a conversation section at the *end* of a unit occasionally. Concentrate more on step 2 (above) in one unit, more on step 3 in another. Sometimes use the alternative ideas suggested in the teacher's notes on each conversation.

*Teacher's notes*

The teacher's notes give the characters, situation, and topic(s) of each conversation, as well as alternative ideas for introducing each unit. The first three conversations are reproduced in the form of an annotated transcript, with the functions labeled and the expressions that are used to carry out the functions in italics.

## ***Presentations***

*Content*

The presentation sections include descriptions of the functions and various ways of carrying them out. Each unit usually has three presentation sections, each followed by various exercises and activities. One presentation section and its exercises might take about 45–60 minutes of class time to cover.

*Procedure*

Students should be asked to read these sections by themselves, preferably at home, before you cover them in class. A good way to handle the presentation sections is to have the students close their books and for you to use the tape and a blackboard. The tape presents expressions used to carry out the function under discussion in a lively way, and you can then provide further information and personal advice on how and when to use them correctly.

Alternatively, provided your class has thoroughly prepared itself for work on this section beforehand, you can call on the students to remember expressions, so that ideas will come from them – it is always better for students to make suggestions than for the teacher to “spoonfeed” them.

Whichever procedure you use, allow your students to introduce similar expressions from their own experience. Ask them to suggest examples of each expression in use. Make sure they can decide when each expression would be appropriate.

*Changing the expressions*

You are encouraged to change the lists of expressions that are provided in the presentation sections to suit your own or the local way of speaking. You should feel free to add, drop, or modify expressions. (If you are not sure about the appropriateness of an expression ask a native speaker

about it.) In any case, you may decide to concentrate your teaching on a selection of expressions that is not too easy or too hard for your class.

*Choice  
of  
expressions*

From the set of expressions that you cover in class – there should always be several for each function – your students should be free to choose a few as their own favorites. The focus of each lesson should be on *understanding* functions expressed in a *wide* variety of ways, but *expressing* functions – in a *few* ways that the students feel most comfortable with. This element of choosing some expressions from a possible range is precisely what fluent speakers of a language do all the time – we know more expressions than we use, and we must always make a quick choice of one expression to use in any given situation. This is an essential ingredient of the functional approach.

*Unpredict-  
able  
language*

Some of the essential information is not given in the presentation section at all – often the most important thing is what students say *after* an introductory phrase. But since no one can predict what a student will actually say after *As I see it . . .*, for example, this information cannot be given in the book. Whatever students say, you must be prepared to provide some necessary vocabulary, to offer advice on usage, and to correct mistakes. True communication, which is the goal at this level of language learning, is often expressed through language that is unpredictable. Although dealing with this sort of unpredictable language may seem very demanding, it is certainly also extremely rewarding, and it is an essential part of training students to actually communicate their ideas.

*Pronuncia-  
tion and  
simple drills*

It may be necessary for you to do some **controlled pronunciation** practice – the tape will be useful for this. Students have to feel comfortable pronouncing an expression, especially if it's a long one, before they can start to use it. Pay particular attention to the tone of voice, for example, the polite and impolite way of saying *Would you open the window, please?* Apart from repetition of the new expressions in short sentences, your class may also benefit from some simple drills of the recommended expressions before moving on to the other exercises. In these simple drills, students need not produce complete, accurate communications but should use the recommended expressions in brief exchanges. Ideas for several such drills will be found in the presentation sections in the teacher's notes.

*Teacher's  
notes*

Additional expressions that you may want to teach are given. There are also notes on points to watch out for and suggestions for some simple drills of the expressions being taught.

---

### ***Exercises***

There are three different kinds of exercise sections for practicing the material taught in the presentation sections. An exercise can take anywhere from 10 to 25 minutes to do.

*Teacher-  
controlled  
exercises*

The first exercise after each presentation is usually "teacher controlled," so that you have a chance to advise and correct your class before the freer exercise sections. Try to concentrate on helping the students to express themselves. Encourage them not to play safe but to experiment. Help them

to concentrate on using the recommended expressions. Encourage them to use some “new” expressions rather than just the “easy” expressions they know already. You may need to interrupt frequently during this first exercise section.

*Freer exercises*

The later exercise sections are much freer. They are designed to build confidence and fluency. Many of these sections require students to work together in pairs or small groups. It is important to set the scene very carefully in many of these exercises so that the students know exactly what they have to do and can get involved in the situation. Such scene-setting comes to life more if you do it in your own personal way, rather than relying on the printed words in the book.

*Consolidation exercises*

Finally, many units have a consolidation exercise at the end that practices expressions from all the presentations in the unit.

*Procedures:*

In the freer exercises, it is important not to interrupt students in the middle of a sentence or conversation just because a mistake has been made. This does not mean that you can sit back and relax – you should go around the room *monitoring* the conversations. This involves making notes of some good, and some not-so-good, ways of expressing oneself that you hear (these will be used later). Help students who are stuck, but try not to give too much help – otherwise the students will come to rely on you constantly. And don't correct every mistake – otherwise the students may become too mistake-conscious and tongue-tied. You will find the students correcting each other as they get used to such exercises, and this can be very effective if it is not overdone. Make sure you pause for questions after each exercise; this lets the students air their difficulties and gives you a chance to discuss what you heard as you went around the room.

*Monitoring students' performance*

*Repeating exercises*

You may find the students had so much trouble with a particular exercise that you want to do it all over again, perhaps in different groups. This kind of “replay” can increase confidence a lot and provide a tangible feeling of sudden progress that is often lacking at this level of language learning and that students often find reassuring.

*The extra student*

One minor problem in pair work is that in a class with an odd number of students, one person is left over after the rest of the class has paired off. This is easily solved by having the extra student share the work of one member of a pair. Suggestions for working with an extra student are given where necessary in the teacher's notes.

*Changing partners*

Do not allow students to talk to the same partner every time. Rearrange seating regularly or make sure that students change *partners* frequently. This will make conversations less predictable, and so more realistic. It will also make the exercises more interesting and lively – students can easily get bored with a regular partner.

*Recording and performing*

Once in a while, if possible, record a group in action (using audio or even video) and play back the recording for analysis by the rest of the class. From time to time ask a group to “perform” in front of the class after they have “rehearsed” their conversation.

*Benefits of  
group  
work*

The rationale behind pair or group work may need to be explained to students who feel that they should be corrected constantly by the teacher or that the teacher should control the whole lesson. Reasons for using pair and group work in this course include the following:

The amount of student talking time is greatly increased, and the more students talk, the more fluent they become.

Students feel less inhibited when talking privately to another student than when talking in front of the whole class. When they are less inhibited, they experiment more and discover how much they can actually communicate using the English they know already.

Playing roles in the exercises prepares students in a non-threatening way for the roles they may need to play in real-life situations in English.

*Teacher's  
notes*

Additional ideas for teacher-controlled exercises are given, as well as additional ideas for freer exercises.

---

*Communication activities*

*Content*

The freest, most open-ended exercises of all are the communication activities. These involve two or more sides communicating with each other in discussions, role plays, problem-solving activities, and so on.

*Format*

The communication activity sections in the individual units give instructions on (a) how to divide up the class, (b) the subject of the activity, and (c) with what activity number to begin in the *Communication activities* section at the back of the book. One activity at the back of the book often leads to another, until the students are instructed to reassemble as a class, discuss, and proceed in the unit they were studying. (A bookmark may come in handy for students to keep their places in the unit proper.)

*Information  
gap*

The actual activities are printed with the instructions for each group or individual student on different pages, so that the participants will not see each other's instructions. Don't allow students to prepare ahead of time or to "cheat" by looking at each other's instructions – the whole point of the communication activities is to *reveal* information to some students and *withhold* it from others who must try and get it. This creates the "information gap" or "uncertainty" mentioned at the beginning as one of the essential ingredients of genuine communication.

*Procedure*

In the communication activities, you have to trust the book to control the conversation; only step in when things are going too slowly or too fast. Try not to interrupt the flow of conversations in any way, but monitor the conversations and give help where it is needed. You may have to stop the activity at some point to make time for the very important discussion period. The students then report on what they did, and you and the class discuss their performance – not as actors but as speakers of English. The remarks made above on the procedures for freer exercises apply equally well to handling communication activities, particularly the remarks on monitoring the conversations, repeating activities, changing partners, and recording.

<i>Teacher's notes</i>	The complete "route" through the communication activities for each unit is provided. There is also a brief description of the topic of each activity and a note on each student's or group's role, so that you can see at a glance how the activity works. Wherever necessary, there is a note on how to work with an extra student.
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### **Written work**

<i>Content</i>	The written work section at the end of every unit gives more opportunities for experimenting with different ways of expressing the functions dealt with in the unit. It is intended to bring together much of what has been covered in the unit and is a useful check on what has been mastered and where problems still lie.
<i>Procedure</i>	It is <b>best</b> to discuss each piece of written work with the students before they tackle it and to decide together on some good ways to deal with it. If you assign it as homework, make sure your students know exactly what to do. You may have to spend some time on mistakes when you hand written work back – focus more on how well students have communicated their thoughts than on correct grammar and spelling.
<i>Teacher's notes</i>	The opening lines of a possible version of each written task are given. Very often this is a good way of showing students how to start confidently – the rest is up to them. These opening lines are just suggestions; they are not intended to be models.

### **Conclusion**

*Functions of American English* may be a little different from what you are used to, but since real-life communication is so often unpredictable, a course that aims to teach it must in some ways be unpredictable too. During a lesson it is important to be flexible and to allow things to happen that you haven't planned – as long as they are within the scope of the course. In this way, classroom communication can become even more true to life. We hope that you and your students will enjoy using this course and that you will find it helps you to stimulate each other to communicate.



# 1

## Talking about yourself, starting a conversation, making a date

*Note:* Make sure that the students have read the *Introduction to the student* in their books to get a brief overview of what they are about to do. (Have them read it section by section and ask you about anything that they do not understand. The *Introduction to the teacher* may help you to answer their questions.)

### Functional objectives

In this unit, the students and the teacher will get to know each other; the teacher will then tailor the course (or the emphasis of lessons) to suit the needs and interests of the class; the students will extend their ability to make contact with strangers, to talk about themselves, to get others to talk about themselves, and to arrange meetings with people.

### Presupposed knowledge

Students should already know:

- the necessary vocabulary to describe their background, education, job, and interests
- how to break the ice by talking about the weather

The exercises in this unit will show the gaps in your class's knowledge. But you may want to ask around the class, making sure each student can name his or her job, hobbies, and educational qualifications before you begin the unit.

---

### 1.1

#### Conversation

The setting: a crowded cafeteria-style restaurant. Anne is sitting alone, and John (who does not know Anne) approaches . . .

Begin with Student's Books closed. Play the tape through once for general meaning. Play it again, stopping the tape after each example of one of the functions highlighted in this unit (see title of unit and functional objectives). Ask students to tell you what the speakers said, and write these examples on the board.

Finally, you may want to play the tape again and ask students to underline the examples in their books.

The following is a transcript of the conversation, with the functions focused on in this unit labeled on the left and the expressions used to carry out the functions in *italics*.



starting a conversation	John: <i>Excuse me, is anybody sitting here?</i>
	Anne: Uh no . . . no, here, let me move my purse from the chair.
starting a conversation	John: Oh, thank you. <i>Say, haven't I seen you with Jack Davidson?</i>
	Anne: I work with Jack Davidson. How do you know Jack?
getting someone to talk about herself	John: Oh, Jack and I went to school together. <i>What sort of work do you do?</i>
getting someone to talk about himself	Anne: Oh, I . . . I work on commercial accounts at the trust company with Jack. Um . . . <i>what do you do?</i>
	John: I'm a telephone installer – I just happen to be working on this street the last couple of days. <i>I should introduce myself – my name's John Spencer.</i>
introducing yourself	
introducing yourself	Anne: <i>Well pleased to meet you! I'm Anne Kennedy.</i>
getting someone to talk about herself	John: Happy to know you. <i>Do you live around here?</i>
	Anne: Yeah, I live in the neighborhood – it's real convenient to work.
	John: Oh, it sounds like . . .
	[fade]
making a date	John: . . . <i>Are you doing anything tonight?</i>
refusing an offer of a date	Anne: Oh . . . uh, sorry, I'm afraid I'm busy tonight.
making another date	John: <i>Well how about tomorrow? Maybe we could go to a movie.</i>
accepting an offer of a date	Anne: <i>Hey, that sounds like a great idea! Um . . . do you like comedies?</i>
	John: Oh yeah, I like comedies . . . uh, let's see what could we see? How about <i>Bread and Chocolate</i> ? 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**

Discuss with the class the sort of questions you would ask someone you have just met. For example:

*Do you live near here?*

*Where do you come from?*

*What do you do?*

Point out that the pair work in the next section will enable them to relax, since they will be talking without an audience, and to concentrate on finding things out rather than expressing themselves with complete accuracy. It also means that they are on their own to some extent – so they should call