

•B2 Exam Classes: Finding the Balance

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•Abstract

Teaching a B2 exam course? Find yourself falling into the same old exam practice routine? Consistent practice and routine are key to successful exam prep, but variety is important too. So let's look at some engaging tasks that will spice up your lessons while helping your students learn strategies and practice skills to meet the demands of the exam.

•Bio data

Brian Engquist has spent over 20 years as an English teacher and teacher trainer. He often speaks about Blended Learning, advances in technology applied to education, assessment, and the evolving roles of teachers and students in this landscape. He works as Teacher Training Department Manager for Spain and Portugal.

•Spot the idiom:



We need to...put ourselves in our students' shoes!

NB. Teaching idioms with pictures can be effective and memorable for students.

•Pressure!

External exams put students under pressure: that pressure can come from themselves, their teachers or their parents. A lot depends on external exams: perhaps they need certification to get into a university or to get a job.

Keys to success in external exams include understanding the requirements of the exam and having appropriate strategies. Lots of practice helps.

However, we shouldn't forget that learning and emotions are linked: students need to be engaged to learn, therefore we need to keep things interesting.

•Skills and strategies

Look at A) and B). Which is a skill and which is a strategy?

- Read the questions and mark the key words before reading the text.
- Scan each section quickly to find the information related to the questions. The information in the text will not be written in the same way as it is in the options, although it will have the same meaning.
- Highlight possible answers.

A)

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Can scan a long text or a set of related texts in order to find specific information. (CA)



B)

Exams are becoming more skills-based, showing what you CAN DO with the language. However, for now there is still a certain degree of exam strategy involved.

B) is a skill and A) is a strategy

•Activity 1: Use of English, Sentence transformations

6 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

- 1 People expect tourists to carry sticks to protect themselves from curious monkeys.
ARE
Tourists sticks to protect themselves from curious monkeys.
- 2 Thai people know that the monkeys are a huge tourist attraction.
BE
Monkeys a huge tourist attraction.
- 3 Reports claim that twenty top chefs have been invited to prepare the meal.
THAT
It twenty top chefs have been invited to prepare the meal.
- 4 Locals believe that 2,000 kilos of food were consumed at the last feast.
HAVE
2,000 kilos of food consumed at the last feast.
- 5 The tourist office has estimated that over 10,000 visitors watch the feast.
BEEN
It that over 10,000 visitors watch the feast.
- 6 Some people think monkeys get very aggressive around food.
TO
Monkeys very aggressive around food.

What's the skill in this exercise?

Sentence transformation = paraphrasing / rephrasing

When might we rephrase something?

When we sense our listener hasn't understood.

It is a skill, though we use it more in spoken English than in written English

We can predict the types of constructions that we'll need to manipulate.

For example, transforming active to passive.

•Adding a spoken element

There are two decks of cards which are numbered. Each card has a corresponding one in the other deck. Pupils are put into pairs and get a deck each. One gets the student cards (on the left), the other the teacher cards. The student reads out their sentence. The teacher gives the student the word or words they have to use when they rephrase the sentence. How many can they get?

Ronaldo didn't score as many goals as he had expected.



Ronaldo didn't score as many goals as he had expected.

- a. Ronaldo scored **fewer** goals than he had expected.
- b. Fewer goals were **scored by** Ronaldo than he expected.
- c. Ronaldo had expected **to score** more goals.

For more examples, see the worksheet at the end of this document.

•Reading: multiple matching

6A Music

Module 6
Enjoying yourself 6

Reading (Paper 1 Part 7)

Before you read

- Look at the title and introductory paragraph of the article and answer the questions.
 - Which of the types of music in the box do you associate with 'easy listening' and which with 'youthful rebellion'? Add any other types you can think of.

country disco folk heavy metal hip hop jazz R&B rap
reggae rock salsa swing

- What types of music do you associate with the instruments in the box? (For example, the trumpet and saxophone are played in jazz bands.) Add any other instruments you can think of.

accordion acoustic guitar banjo clarinet electric guitar flute
harmonica harp keyboard piano saxophone sitar
tabla drums trumpet violin xylophone

Skimming

- Skim the text to find out what kind of music genre each person is known for.

Multiple matching

- Do the task. Use the Help notes for support with certain items.

► EXPERT STRATEGIES pages 175 and 177

You are going to read an article about young musicians who are well known for music that was popular in their parents' or grandparents' day. For questions 1–10, choose from the people (A–D). The people may be chosen more than once.

Which musician:

- | | |
|---|----|
| is globally very successful? | 1 |
| has a celebrity following? | 2 |
| has had a wide and varied experience of performing live? | 3 |
| likes to dress up when doing a show? | 4 |
| admits to not being fashionable with younger fans? | 5 |
| plays music which is a mixture of different genres? | 6 |
| was trained as a classical musician? | 7 |
| uses music as a political message? | 8 |
| receives a mixed reaction from music lovers? | 9 |
| wanted to offer an alternative to the usual music on offer? | 10 |

► HELP

- Find a word which means the same as 'global'.
- Celebrities might include famous actors and models.
- What is an idiomatic way to say 'performing live'?

Task analysis

- Compare and give reasons for your answers.

Feels nothing like teen spirit

The albums chart is filled with some of the least offensive music ever made and rock critics are wondering whatever happened to youthful rebellion, as embodied by punk rock. The stars of easy listening see things differently.



A When James Cullum was a teenager, music was his hobby and he worked his way through college doing every kind of gig possible – weddings, cruise liners, parties – and playing in every band going from heavy metal to freestyle hip hop. Backed by experienced professionals on double bass and drums, the charismatic vocalist and pianist brings a contemporary approach to jazz. 'What I'm doing isn't pure jazz. Pop, rock, dance, hip hop – everything gets thrown together.' He covers heroes of his own generation like Coldplay and Radiohead, as well as those of the past by doing jazzy new interpretations of their songs but also writes songs of his own with modern themes in old styles. A gifted but self-taught performer, Cullum provokes extremes of love and loathing amongst record buyers and jazz purists.



B Michael Bublé has gone from strength to strength since he achieved over a million worldwide sales for his first album of old dance band favourites from the 1930s and 40s. He discovered swing through his Italian grandfather. 'While I was growing up, this music would be everywhere. Of course, I heard modern stuff too but there wasn't enough melody for me. Swing is all about rhythm. When I was growing up, kids weren't given any choice, so this was my rebellion. I like rap, pop and R&B but for too long there's only been room for that and nothing else.'



C At the age of 19, Katie Melua spent most of the year at number one in the charts. Her music is not easily categorised but she laughs at the idea that she is conservative. 'If everyone else was doing jazz, blues and folk in the charts, then you could accuse me of this. But everyone's doing R&B and hip hop.' Haven't some of her contemporaries accused her of being a little unexciting? 'OK, it happens not to be hip and cool but I'm not suddenly going to get an electric guitar out just to attract the kids. Perhaps my music appeals to an older generation because I myself listen to artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Bob Dylan and Eva Cassidy. When I heard Cassidy's *Over the Rainbow*, it opened my eyes because it sounded old-fashioned but also fresh and new.' So would she ever consider using her fame to write a song about the wrongs of the world, as Dylan did? 'I already have. This kind of protest can be a powerful tool with young people and it's been neglected in the current popular charts.'



D Being in a band which does cover versions of old songs is rarely cool or glamorous but Marcella Puppini includes supermodel Kate Moss amongst her famous fans. Marcella met the other two 'Puppini Sisters' at the Royal College of Music, where they followed a traditional course in singing and learnt to play various instruments, including the piano, saxophone, violin, harp and accordion. All accomplished musicians, in 2004 they decided to turn the clock back 60 years to form a three-part harmony group. As well as creating up-to-date interpretations of favourites from the 1940s, they also translate 'modern' songs and reinterpret them in the 1940s style. Helped by the present vogue for all things retro, they have achieved a cult following in the coolest, trendiest clubs and festivals in the UK, wearing clothes and make-up in keeping with the songs they sing.

Discussion

- Discuss the questions.
 - Do you agree that contemporary music is not 'rebellious'? Should it be?
 - Do you like singers to write their own songs or do you prefer them to do covers?
 - What kind of music do you like?

What is the skill involved?

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Can scan a long text or a set of related texts in order to find specific information. (CA)



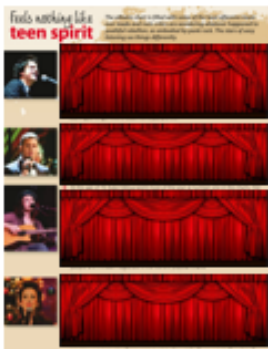
What's the strategy? Can you put the letters in the right order? (Answers on next page.)

- A** • Scan each section quickly to find the information related to the questions. The information in the text will not be written in the same way as it is in the options, although it will have the same meaning.
- B** • Highlight possible answers.
- C** • Leave any question you are not sure about but remember to go back to it later and choose the most likely answer.
- D** • Read the section of the text you choose again more carefully. Be careful: there may be similar ideas or information in another section.
- E** • Read the questions and mark the key words before reading the text.

Multiple matching reading strategy order: E,A,B,D,C

•Idea 1: jigsaw reading for gist

When you read ‘normally’ you often read for gist to get the main idea before searching for details.



We're going to read to gist first here, but we are going to make the task a cooperative activity and we are going to include a speaking and listening element (if we wanted to exactly recreate exam conditions every time we did a reading exercise, classes around this skill would be silent).

Students are put into groups of four. Each one comes up to the board (where the text is projected / alternative – read from text book and hide the others) to read their text and has to retell it to their fellow group members.

The aim is to get a general idea of the four texts – each student must fulfill their role for the group to succeed.

Idea 2: motivating students with an interactive quiz

We are adding a bit of competition and fun to the equation. Technology too – this is motivating for students.

[Try the kahoot here](#)

•Writing: the essay

WRITING REFERENCE

I Model answers, with hints and useful phrases

1.1 Essay (Part 1)

For each answer, see page 35, 36 and 38.

TASK

On your English class you have been talking about technology. Now your English teacher has asked you to write an essay.

Write an essay on the topic: **Do people depend too much on technology nowadays?**

Notes

Write about:

- 1 communication
- 2 education
- 3 recreation

Write your essay. (You should write 140-190 words.)

Model answer

Technology plays many aspects of life, it affects the knowledge, communication and also the transportation, education and entertainment, but it is not perfect in these aspects.

Some people are afraid that if people spend all their time using technology, they will lose their ability to think for themselves. They become lazy to learn and understand. They can change computers in many places, and they can understand it, they can use it. With people are using too much technology, although they can understand it, they can use it.

Education has benefited from technology as students can find all the information they need in seconds without needing to spend time going through books. However, it also has the ability to ruin the education, this is not a good thing.

It is very easy to find information through technology, and it is also easy to find it. However, we all depend on our special abilities in many ways, and these are produced by technology, but we have to make better use of the skills of the people.

In my opinion, we have to accept the fact that technology is not perfect, but we should be aware of the dangers of technology and understand it.

DON'T start by saying *I agree with this* – your **essay** should present your own argument.

DO state the topic in your first sentence, but use your own words.

DO use rhetorical questions to engage the reader with the topic.

DO include supporting detail for the points in each paragraph.

DO include your own idea.

DO use linking expressions to introduce points in an **essay**.

DON'T forget to express your opinion in the conclusion.

Here are some of the key considerations for students who are writing an essay.

The aim of our activity is to build up variety in the students' use of linking words – we won't have to read 'however' or 'on the other hand' three times per essay.

•The Question:

•The model essay

Pollution and environmental damage are serious problems affecting us all. **Although / Even though / Despite the fact that** they are a real challenge, are these problems impossible to solve?

Passenger cars release gases **such as / like / for instance** carbon dioxide, which can create global warming. **Furthermore / What's more / In addition**, many cities suffer from clouds of smog **because / as / given that** too many people take their cars. **However / Nevertheless / Nonetheless**, electric cars are becoming more popular and public transport is improving. In some cities (like London) you have to pay to go into the centre in your car, which reduces pollution.

Rivers can be polluted by companies who pump toxic waste into them. **Additionally / Furthermore / What's more**; oil spills can cause damage to our seas. **Despite that / In**

spite of that / Be that as it may, governments are getting stricter on companies who break the rules **regarding / concerning / relating to** water pollution, which should improve the situation.

Power stations which burn fossil fuels to create energy damage our environment, causing the greenhouse effect. Nevertheless, we are developing new types of renewable energies, such as wind or solar power, so we won't need to use coal.

In conclusion / To conclude/ To sum up we are polluting our planet in many ways, but there are environmentally-friendly alternatives, so **in my view / in my opinion / I believe** we can solve the problems if we want to.

•Functional language

Students categorize each group of three words in this table

Making an additional point

Introducing an example

Giving a reason

Giving an opinion

Making a contrast

Meaning 'about'

Concluding

•Memory race

To help our students remember the linking words, we're going to do a 'memory race' activity.
Procedure:

Students underline one word from each set of three. They don't show their partner what they have underlined.

Student A starts reading the essay. When they get to the first set of three words, they guess which one student B has chosen. If they get it right, student B says so and student A can keep reading. If they get it wrong, it is Student B's turn.

Student B starts reading the essay. Again, when they get to the first set of three words, they guess which one student A has chosen. If they get it right, student A says so and student B can keep reading. If they get it wrong, it is Student A's turn again.

Student A starts from the beginning again and will need to remember what they got wrong last time and try a different option. Ultimately, the aim is to get to the end of the essay, remembering all of your partner's options.

It is a tough challenge, but my experience is that students enjoy it and are motivating to win!

NEXT STEP.

Drilling is useful, but of course the students need to USE the words themselves. You would set an essay for homework on a similar topic (the unit has been on the environment), and tell the pupils to use the linking phrases which have been drilled, but that they are not permitted to use any of the linking phrases more than once.

•Speaking: coming to a conclusion

This question underwent a change in 2015. Apart from the picture stimulus changing to a word spider, the 

discussion and coming to a conclusion was separated.

If we want our students to come to a conclusion we'll need to provide the language for them to do so and provide practice with that language.

•Activity: disappearing dialogue

Students role play the following dialogue. Support is gradually taken away. Can they remember the full dialogue? This exercise could be done with PowerPoint and a projector or even with a chalk board and a rubber!

Screen 1:

Screen 2:

Screen 3:

• **Materials used in the session:**



Part 2

You will hear a radio interview about a new place called the Gold at a local radio station. The interview is in two parts. Listen to the first part and answer the questions.

Lance Arbury: working at a zoo

Lance Arbury works at the zoo in the city.

The interview with Lance started at 10.15.

During the interview, Lance talked about working at the zoo.

After the interview, Lance talked about his job.

Lance finished part of the interview at 11.15.

Lance says that he likes to report the interview on the radio.



1. *They had never been to France before.*

aIt was the **first** time they had been to France.

a**This** was the first time they had been to France.

2. *She reads much better now than she did in the past.*

aShe **didn't** use to read so/as well.

bShe never **used** to play so/as well.

cShe didn't **read** as well before/in the past.

dShe's a much better **reader** now than she used to **be**.

eShe's a much better **reader** than she was **before**.

fShe **wasn't such** a good reader before.

3. *Ronaldo didn't score as many goals as he had expected.*

aRonaldo scored **fewer** goals than he had expected.

aFewer goals were **scored by** Ronaldo than he expected.

aRonaldo had expected **to score** more goals.

4. *It is unlikely that England will win the World Cup.*

aEngland are unlikely **to win** the World Cup.

bEngland will **probably** not win the World Cup.

cEngland **probably** won't win the World Cup.

dThere is little/not much **chance** that England will win the World Cup.

5. *If your work in class doesn't suddenly improve, your grades will stay the same.*

a**Unless** your work in class suddenly improves, your grades will stay the same.

bIf your work in class suddenly **improves**, your grades will improve.

c**Unless** there is a **sudden** improvement in your work in class, your grades will stay the same.

d**If** your work in class doesn't improve, **neither** will your grades.

6. *He couldn't finish the marathon because of the heat.*

aHe wasn't **able** to finish the marathon because of the heat.

bHe was **unable** to finish the marathon because of the heat.

cThe heat **prevented** him from finishing the marathon.

dHe was **prevented** from finishing the marathon **by** the heat.

7. *"Do you know the cost of the tickets?" Jane asked me.*

aJane asked **me** if I knew the cost of the tickets.

aJane asked me if I knew how **much** the tickets cost.

8. *Almost all my money is gone.*

aI don't have much money **left**.

aI **hardly** have any money left.

aI've **spent** almost all my money.

9. *His behaviour is usually very bad.*

aHis **behaviour** tends to be very bad.

aHe **tends** to behave badly.

aHe has a **tendency** to behave badly.

10. *This is the most excited I've ever been.*

aI have **never** been more excited.

aI have never been **as** excited **as** I am now.

11. Despite winning the prize, she didn't feel happy.

a**Although** she won the prize, she didn't feel happy.

a**Even though** she won the prize, she didn't feel happy.

aIn **spite** of winning the prize, she didn't feel happy.

12. Cold weather affects her health badly.

aCold weather has a **bad** effect on her health.

aHer health is badly **affected** by cold weather.

13. Mark is much taller than Jenny.

aJenny is not nearly **as** tall **as** Mark.

aJenny is much **shorter** than Mark.

