

JIM KNUDSEN

READERS' FORUM 1

HOW-TO ENGLISH

– ADVICE FOR A BETTER LIFE –



NAN'UN-DO

READERS' FORUM

Readers' Forum is a series of three readers (with a fourth volume being planned) that make up a comprehensive, sequential course for students who have achieved a fairly high level of English proficiency. The books' aim is to give students the information, vocabulary, and concepts they need to be able to read English-language newspapers, magazines, and books with complete confidence and to fully participate in serious conversations and discussions.

How-To English: Advice for a Better Life, the first book in the series, is for intermediate-level students. Its 400-450-word readings offer step-by-step advice and instructions on how to perform (and talk about) difficult daily tasks, set and achieve personal goals, and work for a better world. *Everyday English: Current Topics to Read and Talk About*, the second book in the series, is intended for high-intermediate-level students. Its 500-word readings explore a wide variety of current topics and issues, public and private, local and global. *Past, Present, and Future English* is for advanced students. Its 600-word readings take up more challenging topics related to culture, art, history, ethics, and ideas.

The *Readers' Forum* books naturally reinforce and enhance one another. They have similar formats and develop all of the essential skills of reading, writing, listening, and vocabulary building. In some cases, their general subjects (travel, history, sociology, education, and so on), vocabulary, and concepts overlap, but with the topics and concepts discussed in greater detail and looked at from different perspectives, using a more sophisticated vocabulary, in succeeding volumes. To expand students' knowledge and expose them to different writing styles, the books all include pertinent background information and abundant short quotations and citations from various media, academic, and classic sources. Though designed to be used in sequence as a complete and intensive course, the books all stand on their own as well and can be effectively adapted to fit the demands of specific teaching and learning situations.

TO THE STUDENT

At first glance, you might think the title of this book, *How-To English*, means something like “How to become better at English,” and in a way, of course, you would be right. The book *will* help you become a better English reader, listener, speaker, speller, and writer. But if you’ll notice, there’s a hyphen between the “How” and the “To,” so that it becomes “How-To,” an adjective that describes the noun “English.” Thus, what the title really suggests is that this book will give you all the English-language tools you need to learn and talk about how to do all kinds of everyday things—from becoming a better student to taking better smart phone photographs to becoming a better, happier person.

And speaking of “how to,” here’s a brief explanation of what this book’s goals are and what it asks you to do. The first page of each lesson is a warm-up page that introduces you to the most important words and concepts (that is, ideas, technical terms, and current English expressions) in the lesson’s reading. In both KEY WORDS PREVIEW and KEY CONCEPTS PREVIEW, to help you remember them better, you must write out the words and concepts. In THINKING AHEAD, there are three questions that serve as a “sneak preview” outline of what the lesson’s reading is about.

What this means is that once you have done all of the above and then begin reading the lesson’s essay, which is chock-full of useful information and practical “how-to” advice, by the way), you already have the words, concepts, and general knowledge of its contents you need to confidently read right through and fully understand it. And just to make sure you *do* understand it (and to help you remember its contents for future use), the reading is followed by two READING COMPREHENSION exercises. The first (a fill-in-the-blank exercise) asks you to write down some of the essay’s most important facts; the second (True-False questions) will help you “get” the essay’s main ideas and intentions.

The last page of each lesson is designed to reinforce your knowledge of lesson’s vocabulary. In KEY WORDS IN ACTION, you will practice using the lesson’s key words in a different form and somewhat different context from those in which they are used in the reading. USEFUL IDIOMATIC PHRASES both introduces you to and gives you practice in using four common idiomatic phrases that appear in the reading. And in MAKING CONVERSATION, you get a chance to both see how the lesson’s key concepts are used in everyday conversation and to practice using them yourself.

One more thing: the readings and follow-up exercises all include listening practice, which means that *How-To English* also doubles as a listening comprehension booster, pronunciation guide, and conversation text.

So let me say once more: I am confident that by the time you come to the end of *How-To English*, not only will you know how to understand and speak English better. But you will also have a much better idea of how to do many of the things you want and need to do to make your life better—and how to pass this information and advice on to others *in English*.

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Advice for a Better Life

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LESSON 1 HOW TO DEVELOP GOOD STUDY SKILLS AND HABITS



KEY WORDS PREVIEW

Scan the essay on the next page. Find the words in bold that match the definitions/synonyms below. Write the words on the lines.

1. _____ certain way a person acts, behaves, or thinks
2. _____ take the time and trouble to do something
3. _____ say that somebody is the cause of something
4. _____ produce or result in; provide
5. _____ make better or stronger; improve
6. _____ state strongly; demand; require

KEY CONCEPTS PREVIEW

Match these key concepts from today's reading with their definitions below. Write the concepts on the lines.

cognitive scientists conventional wisdom cramming cure routine

1. _____ a fixed way of doing things; daily schedule
2. _____ traditional ideas and customs
3. _____ people who study the brain; psychologists
4. _____ studying hard just before an exam
5. _____ way of healing a disease; remedy

THINKING AHEAD

As you read today's reading, look for answers to these questions.

1. What are some standard ideas about how people learn?
2. Should we have a set time and place to do our studying?
3. What is the main problem with "cramming"?

Read this essay carefully and then do the exercises that follow.



[1] Recent research into how people really learn shows that much conventional wisdom in education has been way off base. Cognitive scientists have discovered much more effective ways to learn and teach. But educators have failed to pick up on them, says Robert Bjork, a psychologist at the University of California at Los Angeles. Benedict Carey, an education writer for the *New York Times*, agrees. But Carey says the researchers themselves are to **blame**, at least in part. For decades, he says, they have had a solid understanding of how people learn. But why didn't they **bother** to let teachers and students in on their secret? It is as if doctors had found a cure for diabetes, but forgot to tell their patients about it. In his book, *How We Learn: The Surprising Truth about Where, When, and Why It Happens*, Carey tries to make up for this. He offers advice on how we can put cognitive science's new findings to use to make us better students and learners.

[2] Most study skills courses **insist** that students have a fixed study routine. They advise students to set a specific time and place to work and to focus on a single subject in one sitting. But experiments show that just the opposite is true. Students who take advantage of the "human **tendency** toward variable attention" do far better than those who don't. Thus, says Carey, try varying your study times and places. Find different study spots for different subjects, because changing the outside context helps to **enrich** the material and slows down forgetting. Also, don't stick to one subject at a time: mix up what you're learning. Alternating among different subjects "leaves a deeper impression on the brain."

[3] And most important of all, warns Carey, don't cram. Cramming may help us pass an exam, but it's not real learning. The information "goes in one ear and out the other" and is soon forgotten. Jam-packing the brain is like "speed-packing a cheap suitcase," Carey says. It holds its load for a while, but then it falls apart and everything tumbles out. So space out your studying. Study the material a few minutes today, a few more tomorrow or the next day, and then a few more a week later. This will help you remember the information much longer and **yield** higher test scores. Perhaps we don't need science to tell us that, though. In this case, experience is the best teacher.

solid = strong; excellent

let (someone) in on = inform; tell about

fixed = set; decided; determined

stick to = stay with; continue; don't give up

space out = take your time; do over a longer period of time; do in steps or pieces

READING COMPREHENSION 1**GETTING DETAILS:**

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with information from the reading. Listen to check your answers.

- Recent research has discovered that there are more effective ways for students and teachers to _____ and _____.
- Robert Bjork teaches at the _____ branch of the University of California.
- Benedict writes about _____ topics for the _____.
- Carey compares some education researchers to _____ who have found a cure for _____.
- In his book, Carey says that there is some _____ new truth about how we learn.
- Most study skills courses recommend focusing on one _____ in a single sitting.
- _____ is another way to say changing or alternating.
- If we change the context in which we study, it will slow down _____.
- Carey compares cramming to _____ a cheap _____.
- Carey says that we should _____ out our studying over a few days or weeks.

READING COMPREHENSION 2**UNDERSTANDING IDEAS:**

Read these sentences. Circle T if the sentence is true, F if it is false.

- T** **F** Benedict Carey says researchers are entirely to blame for not having discovered how people really learn.
- T** **F** The aim of Carey's book is to introduce people to new ideas and to help them learn and study more effectively.
- T** **F** The phrase "human tendency toward variable attention" implies that people aren't always able to focus at the same level.
- T** **F** Carey disagrees with the idea that cramming can actually help us get a higher score on an exam.



**KEY WORDS IN ACTION**

Fill in the blank in each sentence below with the correct form of one of the **KEY WORDS** you wrote on page 8. Listen to check your answers.

- I _____ to study better in the library than at home.
- I'm happy to help you study. It's no _____ at all.
- The lecture was an _____ experience. I learned a lot.
- Stop _____ me! You made the mistake, not me.
- The experiment _____ somewhat surprising results.
- The teacher is very _____ on our using correct grammar.

USEFUL IDIOMATIC PHRASES

Fill in each blank below with one of these words so that sentence B means the same as sentence A.

base	fall	make	pick
------	------	------	------

- A: What you are saying is not at all correct.
B: Your comments are way off _____.
- A: Did you understand what the speaker said? I didn't.
B: I didn't _____ up on what the speaker said, did you?
- A: Please let me apologize for what I said.
B: I would like to _____ up for what I said.
- A: The problem is that cheap bags don't last long.
B: The trouble with inexpensive bags is that they soon _____ apart.

MAKING CONVERSATION

Complete each answer below with one of the **KEY CONCEPTS** on page 8. Listen to check your answers. Then practice the conversations with a partner.

- A: Have our teaching and studying methods really been wrong?
B: That's what research by _____ says.
- A: Shouldn't we concentrate on one subject at a time?
B: Yes, according to _____ anyway.
- A: Do you have a fixed study schedule each day?
B: No, I try to vary my daily _____.
- A: Are you going to stay up all night studying before the big test?
B: No, _____ has never worked for me.
- A: What's that you're reading?
B: It's an article about a psychologist who thinks he may have found a _____ for laziness. You should read it.



LESSON 2 HOW TO STOP PROCRASTINATING



KEY WORDS PREVIEW

Scan the essay on the next page. Find the words in bold that match the definitions/synonyms below. Write the words on the lines.

1. _____ dependable; trustworthy
2. _____ finished; achieved; succeeded in doing
3. _____ anger; bad feeling; bitterness
4. _____ give a prize to someone for doing good
5. _____ take attention away from; disturb; divert
6. _____ use in a bad or irresponsible way

KEY CONCEPTS PREVIEW

Match these key concepts from today's reading with their definitions below. Write the concepts on the lines.

depression fatigue social media support group to-do list

1. _____ things like Facebook and Twitter
2. _____ deep sadness
3. _____ extreme tiredness
4. _____ things or chores that you must finish
5. _____ people who can help you with your problems

THINKING AHEAD

As you read today's reading, look for answers to these questions.

1. Why do people procrastinate and do things at the last minute?
2. What are some practical things you can do to stop procrastinating?
3. How is digital technology both good and bad for procrastinators?

Read this essay carefully and then do the exercises that follow.



[1] We all procrastinate, and college students are especially “good” at it. In fact, 80 to 95% of students wait until the last minute to do coursework. But chronic procrastination can make students sick—literally. At the beginning of term, procrastinators feel healthy, energetic, and stress-free. But by the end, they suffer from colds, flu, headaches, fatigue, depression and other stress-related illnesses much more often than non-procrastinators. 5
Not getting the job done can even kill relationships. By putting things off, procrastinators inconvenience friends, family, and classmates, causing lasting **resentment**.

[2] Why do we procrastinate? For many, it’s just a bad habit. Others are filled with fear or self-doubt. Some foolishly hope that the task will magically disappear. Others tell themselves they have to be “in the right mood” to tackle a specific chore. Many believe that they work 10
better under the pressure of time. But these are all excuses—not real reasons. So we let time slip through our fingers and end up doing a rushed, sloppy job. No wonder the English novelist Charles Dickens called procrastination the “thief of time.”

[3] If you tend to let things go until the last minute and want to stop, here are a few suggestions, some psychological, some practical, to help you get started—right away. 15

[4] Change your outlook. Find a positive way to express a task or goal to yourself. Don’t say, “I *have to* write a long paper for English class.” Instead say, “I *want to* write a great English paper so I can win a study-abroad scholarship.”

[5] Imagine the future you want. Picture yourself celebrating what you’ve **accomplished**, surrounded by friends and family, all congratulating you. At the same time, imagine how let 20
down and ashamed you will feel if you don’t do it.

[6] Make a to-do list. Write down your goals or tasks and set a deadline for each. But be realistic. The bigger your goal, the harder it will seem. So break it up into small, manageable steps. Then **reward** yourself for each bit of progress.

[7] Form a “support group.” Recruit some **reliable** friends and let them know what your 25
goals are. Then report your progress to them regularly.

[8] Use, but don’t **abuse** technology. The Internet, cellphones, and social media are a great temptation for procrastinators. So you’ll have to manage your use of them. Ironically, technology is available to help you. Anti-procrastination apps like RescueTime or Antisocial can give you a hand. They can make sure other kinds of technology don’t **distract** you from 30
your goals.

chronic = lasting for a long time; serious

a rushed, sloppy job = fast, careless, poor [shoddy] work

scholarship = gift or prize of money given to college students to help pay for their college education, usually earned for academic or athletic excellence

temptation = lure; attraction; weakness

READING COMPREHENSION 1**GETTING DETAILS:**

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with information from the reading. Listen to check your answers.

1. Nearly all students wait until the last _____ to study for tests and do assignments.
2. When school starts, procrastinators feel _____, _____, and stress-free.
3. Procrastinating can even kill _____ by causing friends, family, and classmates _____.
4. Some procrastinators lack confidence and are filled with _____ and self-doubt.
5. Charles Dickens was a great English _____.
6. Your _____ is your way of seeing things.
7. One suggestion is to imagine the happy, successful _____ you see yourself having.
8. You should be realistic, especially with _____ goals.
9. Regularly report your _____ to some reliable friends.
10. RescueTime is an anti-procrastination _____.

READING COMPREHENSION 2**UNDERSTANDING IDEAS:**

Read these sentences. Circle T if the sentence is true, F if it is false.

1. **T** **F** Some people think that they will do a better job if they don't start a task until there is almost no time left.
2. **T** **F** Most of the time, procrastinators don't do as good a job as they should or could have.
3. **T** **F** To stop procrastinating, you should always see your future positively and never try to imagine what it would be like to fail.
4. **T** **F** The author used the word "ironically" in paragraph 8 probably because he thinks it's interesting that technology can be both bad and good for procrastinators.



**KEY WORDS IN ACTION**

Fill in the blank in each sentence below with the correct form of one of the **KEY WORDS** you wrote on page 12. Listen to check your answers.

1. We need workers that we can _____ on to do things on time.
2. What an _____! Congratulations on a job well done!
3. For some reason, Jack _____ my advice and was angered by it.
4. I don't want any _____. Don't let anyone bother me.
5. Dennis ran away from home because his dad was so _____.
6. Teaching is the most _____ job I know. I'm proud to do it.

USEFUL IDIOMATIC PHRASES

Fill in each blank below with one of these words so that sentence B means the same as sentence A.

down	hand	put	right
------	------	-----	-------

1. A: What you did really disappointed me.
B: I was really let _____ by your actions.
2. A: Please answer this e-mail as soon as you get it.
B: I'd appreciate your answering this e-mail _____ away.
3. A: Is there anything I can do to help?
B: Can I give you a _____?
4. A: The longer you wait, the harder it is to go to the dentist.
B: Don't _____ off seeing the dentist. It just gets harder to go.

MAKING CONVERSATION

Complete each answer below with one of the **KEY CONCEPTS** on page 12. Listen to check your answers. Then practice the conversations with a partner.

1. A: Are you on Facebook?
B: No, I've given up on all _____. They're a "thief of time."
2. A: I'm really having a hard time getting organized.
B: Well, let's sit down and make up a _____.
3. A: I don't think I can stop procrastinating on my own.
B: What you need is a _____ of people who will encourage and congratulate you.
4. A: What did you want to see me about today?
B: Well, doctor, I seem to be suffering from _____. I feel tired all the time.
5. A: You look awfully sad. What's up?
B: I just can't seem to get rid of this _____. I feel so low.