

English activities during the holidays

Introduction

You have to practice English regularly. Do not necessarily start with difficult activities but practice regularly. Do not necessarily spend hours in your grammar book, but open it regularly.

- If you have the opportunity to speak English, go for it!
- Watch films or series in English with English subtitles. (This activity will be useful but never enough!)
- Listen to podcasts or watch short videos about the news (at least one a week)
- Read press articles (at least one a week)
- Make grammar revisions (aim at 1 grammar point a week).

Take a small copybook. 17 X 22 cm, 48 pages can be enough. Take notes on the 5 types of activities listed above. I will have a look at your copybooks when the term (semester) starts. Organise your copybook properly with 1 page per activity.

- Title + date and source of the article or podcast
- From 5 to 10 keywords (+ translation if necessary)
- 1 or 2 sentences to sum up the thesis or main point

For grammar revisions: 1 page for 1 grammar point. Make your exercises in the copybook. Correct your exercises with another color and try not to repeat these mistakes next time.

Do not use AI. Use only dictionaries: **Wordreference** or **Cambridge dictionary online**. **Collins Thesaurus** is also very useful to find synonyms.

1°) Listen and watching

Here is a list of news websites I recommend to find reliable and useful podcasts and videos:

- Global news podcast (BBC). The podcast lasts 20 minutes. It mainly deals with international affairs, but it is the latest news and it is fairly accessible (for non-native speakers). Concentrate on only one report (from 1 to 5 minutes). Listen to this report several times and take notes in your copybook. From the middle of the podcast, you will find more general issues (sciences, health, culture...). <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nq0gn/episodes/downloads>
- C4 News: On the following page, you will find short videos about the latest news: <https://www.channel4.com/news/>
- NPR: <https://www.npr.org/sections/news/>. There are many interesting sections, from health to culture and politics. You can either read articles or listen to podcasts (most of them have a transcript that can be useful). If the podcast is too long, listen to the first 5-10 minutes several times.
- PBS: <https://www.pbs.org/show/newshour/>
PBS is also a reliable source. You can search any topic in your search engine and add PBS to check if they have made a report on your topic.

- BBC Learning English (6-minute English): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/features/6-minute-english>. **Rather easy and approachable podcasts. But very good to start with and learn new vocabulary on various topics if you do not feel at ease.**
- Do not hesitate to navigate the Aljazeera website. They tackle various interesting issues. <https://www.aljazeera.com/>
- VOA News: <https://www.voanews.com/>
- Euronews or France 24 (in English) are also interesting

2°) Reading

- BBC news (a public media with a factual tone; their objective is to inform and explain)
- “The Guardian view on...” (left-of-the-centre newspaper; in this section, the articles are rather short. These are editorials, which means that there is a critical point of view about the news or a trend).
- AP News: <https://apnews.com/>
- You can also read other newspapers but they are rarely free (*The Los Angeles Times, The Economist, The New York Times, The Financial Times, The Washington Post, The Atlantic....*)

3°) What type of subjects shall you focus on?

Each time you listen to you watch a news video or read a press article, try and link it to a general issue from the following list. Do not necessarily work on all these issues. This list is made to invite you to choose articles and videos on various subjects. Do not focus only on the latest news (*l'actualité brûlante*). Focus on current controversial issues (*des sujets de société contorversés*).

- US and UK historical landmarks (we'll study that more in class)
- US and UK politics, institutions and declining public trust (we'll study that more in class)
- Law, justice and the rise of political violence (for example the right to bear arms in the US, the rise of anti-Semitism in the UK, recent riots in the UK....)
- A changing population: immigration, diversity, social mobility
- Education (the evolution of education, higher education...)
- Religion and society
- Traditional media (the press, public media, freedom of the press, funding...)
- Social media (social media banned for under-16s, advantages and drawbacks, regulation, algorithms...)
- Individual rights and privacy (surveillance, ID cards, the right privacy in the digital age...)
- Protest movements (Civil Rights, Black Lives Matter, strikes, Women's March, No King movement...)
- Social protection and healthcare (controversies around the welfare state, health issues....)
- The fight for gender equality (the gender pay gap, the glass ceiling...)
- Technology, science and research (advantages and issues, new developments like self-driving cars...)
- Sport and society (money, doping, health, the environment, the Commonwealth Games, the Football World Cup in the US ...)
- Ethical issues (controversies over genetics, assisted dying, abortion, religion, transitioning...)
- Art and culture (art and protest, art and society, access to culture, funding cultural institutions...)

- Climate change and the protection of the environment (heat waves....)
- International relations
- The economy and the evolving job market (the cost of living crisis, economic policies, the impact on AI, the consumer society, tourism...)

4°) Grammar revisions and exercises

The standards for grammar are higher in CPGE than in high school. You are expected to be precise and thorough. It is therefore important to start practising exercises and revising as early as possible. Revise in the order set out below. Do not move on to the next point until you have fully mastered the previous one. For each point, I want you to ensure you have a firm grasp of the basics. Do not get bogged down in the details before you have mastered the basics (the most common structures). We will go into more detail on the finer points during our lessons.

I strongly advise you to check your papers and spot the mistakes that your previous teacher have pointed out. Please, correct them and make exercises on these points.

- Conjugaison du verbe **TO BE** et du verbe **TO HAVE** (présent et passé)
- **La négation** avec les auxiliaires BE, HAVE ou DO (en l'absence des deux autres). Voir le doc joint : « Auxiliary verbs-overview chart »
- Les conjugaisons et l'emploi du **présent simple** (généralité, habitude, action prise dans sa globalité)
- Les conjugaisons et l'emploi du **présent progressif** (be + ING) (action particulière, souvent en déroulement et/ou implication du sujet dans cet évt particulier, pas d'intérêt pour la fin de l'action).
- **Les pronoms** (tous, dont *mine, it, its, she, he, his, her, hers, theirs....*)
- Les adjectifs les plus courants et **la place des adjectifs** (avant le nom)
- Auxiliaire modal + BV ; 1 seul modal à la fois (*I can work hard / I must work hard / He must be able to swim*)
- **WANT TO** (*I want to study physics / I want you to study chemistry*).
- Les **verbes irréguliers** (travaillez d'abord les plus courants, puis lorsque vous les maîtrisez bien, attaquez-vous aux moins courants).

At this stage of your studies, no errors can be tolerated in relation to the points set out above. You may use the sample attached¹ from *Essential Grammar in Use* to make revisions and exercises.

- Les conjugaisons et l'emploi du **preterit** (-ED) (passé souvent daté sans lien avec le présent ; obligatoire avec AGO)
- Les conjugaisons de l'emploi du **present perfect** (Have -EN) (action qui continue dans le présent notamment avec FOR/SINCE ; action qui a des csq dans le présent ; bilan au moment présent)
- **Les questions** /les phrases interrogatives (sont essentielles pour les problématiques !)
- La voie passive

¹ In the English section of the website/platform, « documents to be downloaded »

- **Les auxiliaires modaux:** CAN, MUST, WILL, MAY, MIGHT, SHOULD... (toujours suivis d'une BV, 1 seul modal à la fois....)
- **Le comparatif et le superlatif** (focalisez vous d'abord sur structures les plus courantes avant d'aborder les plus complexes).
- **La détermination nominale** (en particulier THE/Ø)
- La formation et l'emploi du **génitif ('s)**
- **Le past perfect**
- Les mots de liaison / les phrases complexes.....

For your grammar revisions, you have to make exercises regularly and to correct them with the section « key to exercises »/ « answers ».

Find attached²:

- the end of the grammar textbook entitled *Essential Grammar in Use* (for elementary students)
- the end of *English Grammar in Use* (for intermediate students)
- the end of *Advanced Grammar in Use* (for advanced students).

Making these exercises will allow you to spot the chapters on which you have to study.

You also have to start getting used to translating sentences. Find attached a list of sentences to translate.

Last but not least, make sure that you buy the following book: **Raymond Murphy, English Grammar in Use (with answers)**. Any edition will be fine. You can buy it second hand.

Students with an advanced level (C1+) can buy *Advanced Grammar in Use* and can also make exercises in the *Bescherelle Anglais – Les exercices*. (find a sample attached).

Conclusion

Take a small copy book and fill it in regularly it with notes on articles and podcasts and with grammar exercises. Do not seek to do all the suggested activities. You have to **pick and choose** what makes sense and what is useful for you. Quality and regularity are more important than quantity. **Bring your copybook on the first lesson.**

² In the English section of the website/platform, « documents to be downloaded »