

English in Mind Second edition

Level 5 Unit 9

Lesson Plan

Finals countdown: How to avoid
meltdown during exam seasonTHE
INDEPENDENT

AIMS

- to read extensively and study a text related to the Unit theme
- to practise reading for gist and for detailed comprehension
- to understand words in context
- to revise and practise the use of prepositions
- discussion
- (further work)

Total time (approx): 1 hr 30 mins

(Note: Some exercises can be set for homework)

- **a Students' Union** This body co-ordinates social clubs and events, as well as campaigning on student issues, such as campus facilities or student finances.

Time: 8–10 mins

Reading comprehension

- 2** This exercise gives students an opportunity to practise their skimming skills. By focusing their attention on the main topics of the text, they will get an idea of how the text is structured and familiarise themselves with the general ideas presented in it. Most answers include more than one paragraph. Students can do this individually and then compare answers.

Key: 2 12, 13, 14 3 7, 8, 9 4 3, 4, 5 5 6, 11 6 10

Time: 10 mins

- 3** In this task students are helped to deepen their understanding of the text by examining it in more detail and matching statements to the various views expressed. It is best done in pairs to encourage students to help each other find answers and justify their choices. Two of the statements are not based on any actual views presented in the text, and in such instances the answer will be 'N' (no comment). You may need to explain this type of question to your students.

Key: 2 N 3 F 4 T 5 F 6 N 7 F 8 F 9 T 10 T

Time: 10–12 mins

Vocabulary: words in context

- 4** This exercise helps students with some of the less familiar vocabulary in the article. The words have been printed in italics in the text for ease of location. Instruct your students to work through the words, finding them in the text and deciding whether they are being used as nouns (n), adjectives (a) or verbs (v). This should help with matching the words to their correct meanings, as in some cases their function may not be immediately apparent. This is best done in pairs.

Key: 2 (n) f 3 (a) g 4 (a) a 5 (n) i 6 (v) c 7 (n) d
8 (n – gerund) b 9 (a) h

Time: 10 mins

Lead-in

- 1** To introduce the topic of coping with the stress of university exams and to activate students' background knowledge, ask them to look at their worksheets and initiate a general discussion about the university system in the UK. Make sure they understand the meaning of the terms listed in Exercise 1. These terms apply to the UK education system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but not Scotland.

- **A-levels** These are the examinations that students take before leaving school at around the age of 18. Subjects can be taken individually. For entry to most universities, students are required to have at least three good passes at A-level.
- **a modular degree** At many universities degrees are modular, i.e. they are divided into discrete blocks which can be built up into a full degree, normally over the course of three years.
- **continuous assessment** The student's performance is judged continuously throughout the course of study, either by tutor observation or by means of essays or other tasks set, e.g. presentations, group projects.
- **finals** Most universities require students to take examinations in the final year of their degree course.
- **a first; a 2:1** These refer to degree results. A first class degree is the highest, with second class being divided into a 2:1 ('two one') and a 2:2 ('two two'). A third class degree is normally the lowest.

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- 5 Some other informal words and expressions from the text are highlighted in this exercise. Paragraph numbers are given to help students find them in the text and some answers are partially completed. They should use the context to help them identify the correct words or phrases.

Key: 2 *stroking* 3 *burn out* 4 *the final push* 5 *slap down*
6 *padding out* 7 *be all and end all* 8 *nose-to-the-grindstone*

Time: 8 mins

Grammar: prepositions

- 6 Here students practise using prepositions correctly, taking examples from the text. They should attempt to match the prepositions to the verbs and adjective before checking their answers in the text. Paragraph numbers are given for ease of location. Encourage students to learn the verb or adjective **with** the preposition, e.g. concentrate **on**, regardless **of**. Ask them to underline the words or phrases in the text that form the object of the preposition, e.g. 'suffering from *stress-related writing difficulties*' to highlight that this may be a single word, a phrase or a clause.

Key: 2 *suffer from* 3 *engage in* 4 *concentrate on*
5 *focus on* 6 *fall into* 7 *regardless of* 8 *get into*

Time: 5 mins

- 7 This exercise reinforces students' understanding of the use of the prepositions highlighted in Exercise 6. They should try to remember the correct prepositions without looking back at the answers for the previous exercise, although they may do so subsequently in order to check if they are correct. As in Exercise 6, ask them to underline the object of each preposition. In most cases this is a phrase or clause.

Key:

- 2 *into* the trap of thinking you can do it all at the last minute.
3 *on* how much work I still have to do.
4 *into* Oxford or Cambridge University
5 *of* how many hours I sleep.
6 *in* what you are doing.
7 *on* the events leading up to the First World War.
8 *from* headaches

Time: 10 mins

Discussion

- 8 Put students into groups to discuss these questions. Questions 1 and 2 give students an opportunity to talk about how the topic of the text relates to their own lives, while Question 3 encourages them to debate the value of examinations more generally. Questions 2 and 3 can be subsequently opened up for class discussion. Allow students to express their views freely.

Time: 15 mins

Further work

- 9 The following are suggestions for further work based on the issues raised in the article.

a) **Essay.** Students should use the final discussion question as the title for an essay, which will require them to express their views more formally in writing. Ask them to note down the main points for and against examinations that have arisen during their discussions, as well as possible alternatives, e.g. a range of continuous assessment tasks. Get them to think about how many paragraphs they might need, including an introduction and conclusion.

b) **Research.** If students have access to the Internet, this task will promote independent learning and offer practice in skimming and scanning skills, as well as note-taking. First tell them to imagine they are hoping to study at a university in the UK and to decide on a subject to study. Ask them to find information on the following areas, in relation to non-UK students. They could either choose a particular university to focus on, or search for general information.

- entry requirements
- application procedure
- provision of English language support
- examinations and assessment
- fees
- accommodation
- social clubs and societies

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The UCAS site (www.ucas.com) provides a good starting point for this research, with links to other useful websites. They should write notes on their findings and share the information they have found orally in groups.

This article first appeared on Thursday, 17 May 2007, at www.independent.co.uk/news/education/higher/prepare-for-the-finals-countdown-477611.html.

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