



Learn English Through  
Stories.

U Series

Advanced Vocabulary

**Adapted and modified by**

**Kulwant Singh Sandhu.**

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

## **Banta's First Lesson by K S Sandhu**

Banta had just graduated with a degree in English from the University of Nottingham. Before starting his PGCE, he decided to take a year out to gain experience. He found a part-time job teaching ESOL at a local college. His group consisted of C1-level students – advanced learners preparing for university or professional life.

On his first day, Banta felt a mixture of excitement and nerves. The classroom was bright and modern, with students from many countries: Maria from Spain, Ahmed from Egypt, Li from China, and others. They welcomed him warmly.

“Good morning, everyone,” Banta said. “Today we’re going to expand our vocabulary for academic writing and studying. We’ll focus on choosing the right words for different types of written work and effective revision techniques.”

He handed out worksheets. The first exercise asked students to correct sentences with wrong word choices.

“Read number two,” Banta said. “ ‘Little Martha did her first dissertation in school today. It was called My family.’ ”

Maria laughed. “Dissertation? No! That’s for a PhD or Master’s. For a child, it’s a composition or perhaps a short essay.”

“Perfect,” Banta replied. “And for a PhD, it’s a thesis or dissertation. A collection of pieces can be a portfolio, while a single longer piece might be an assignment, an essay, or a project.”

The class worked through the exercise quickly. Ahmed corrected “MSc composition” to “dissertation”, and Li pointed out that a 5,000-word final piece was usually an assignment, not a thesis. They all agreed that a 1,000-word task with a title was an essay, not a project.

Next came a rewriting task. Banta displayed a text about exam preparation.

“When I’m studying in a very focused way because I’m preparing hard for an exam, I don’t see any point in looking up exam papers from previous years, nor is there any point in just learning things by memory...” Maria rewrote the beginning confidently: “When I’m studying intensively because I’m cramming for an exam, I don’t see any point in looking up past papers, nor in learning things by heart.”

Ahmed added, “Some people use clever mnemonics, but there’s no substitute for revising properly – perhaps with a mind map to organise ideas. Rote-learning helps, but only to a limited extent. In the end, you have to bury yourself in your books until you know the subject inside out.”

The discussion flowed naturally. Banta then asked quick questions to check understanding.

“What’s the first version of an essay called?”

“A first draft!” “The final date for submission?”

“A deadline!” “Using someone else’s ideas as your own?”

“Plagiarism!” They covered more: submit instead of hand in, assess instead of mark, drop out of a course, carry out research, feedback from teachers, access online journals, inter-library loan, and how a genius might find revision easy.

The final exercise was gap-fill. Students completed sentences eagerly.

“If you quote something, you must acknowledge your source.”

“Open educational resources are very helpful.”

“Caspar knows the subject inside out – he’s bound to pass!”

As the lesson ended, Maria approached Banta. “Thank you. Now I understand why my university ‘project’ is really an essay, not a thesis. It will help my application a lot.”

Banta smiled. “Precision in vocabulary builds confidence. You all did brilliantly today.”

Walking out, he felt sure this year would prepare him well for teaching. The students had not only learned new words – they had used them with real understanding.

# 1

## Cramming for success: study and academic work

### A Study and exams



Before an exam, some students **cram**<sup>1</sup> for it. Even if you're a **genius**<sup>2</sup>, you'll have to **do some revision**. If the exam happens every year, you can **revise** by looking at **past papers**<sup>3</sup>. Some things can be **memorised** or **learnt (off) by heart**. But **rote-learning**<sup>4</sup> is not sufficient for most subjects. It is also possible to use **mnemonics**<sup>5</sup>. However, all things considered, the best idea is to **bury yourself in your books**<sup>6</sup> and to study **intensively**<sup>7</sup> until you **know the subject inside out**<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> study in a very concentrated way for a short time

<sup>2</sup> an exceptionally clever person

<sup>3</sup> exam papers from previous years

<sup>4</sup> learning purely by repetition

<sup>5</sup> /ni'mɒnɪks/ tricks that help you remember something, for example: 'i' before 'e' except after 'c' is a mnemonic for English spelling (e.g. **friend**, but **receive**)

<sup>6</sup> spend the maximum time studying

<sup>7</sup> in a very focused way

<sup>8</sup> know it completely

### B Academic writing

**composition** could be just 50–100 words, often used for school work

**essay** longer than a composition, more serious, hundreds or thousands of words

**assignment** a long essay, often part of a course, usually thousands of words

**project** like an assignment, but emphasis on student's own material and topic

**portfolio** a collection of individual pieces of work; may include drawings and other examples of creative work as well as writing

**dissertation** a long, research-based work, perhaps 10–15,000 words, for a degree or diploma

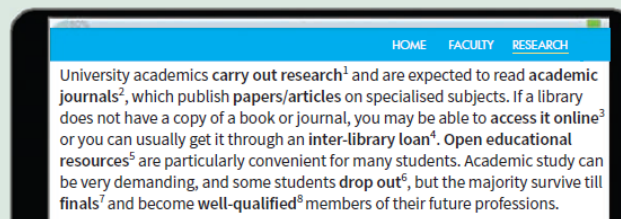
**thesis** a very long, original, research-based work, perhaps 80–100,000 words, for a higher degree (e.g. PhD)

It's a good idea to start with a **mind map**<sup>1</sup> when preparing an essay. Always write a **first draft**<sup>2</sup> before **writing up** the final version. Your essay should be all your own work; **plagiarism**<sup>3</sup> is a very serious offence in colleges and universities. It is an increasing problem because it is so easy to cut and paste from materials available on the internet, and students have to sign a **plagiarism form** to say that the work they are handing in is all their own and that they **acknowledge**<sup>4</sup> any sources they have used. There is usually a **deadline**<sup>5</sup>. After the essay is **submitted**<sup>6</sup>, it will be **assessed**<sup>7</sup> and usually you can get **feedback**<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> diagram that lays out ideas for a topic and how they are connected to one another <sup>2</sup> first, rough version

<sup>3</sup> /'plɛɪdʒərɪzəm/ using other people's work as if it was yours <sup>4</sup> give details of <sup>5</sup> date by which you must hand in the work <sup>6</sup> handed in; *formal* <sup>7</sup> evaluated and given a grade <sup>8</sup> comments from the teacher/tutor

### C Aspects of higher academic study



<sup>1</sup> less formal is **do research**

<sup>2</sup> magazines with academic articles (we do not use the word *magazine* to talk about this kind of academic publication)

<sup>3</sup> get hold of (it) on the internet

<sup>4</sup> system where libraries exchange books/journals with one another

<sup>5</sup> online materials that can be freely used by teachers and students anywhere <sup>6</sup> leave the course before the end <sup>7</sup> last exams before the end of a college or university course <sup>8</sup> with the right formal qualifications

## Exercises

### 1.1 Correct the wrong usage of words to do with written work in these sentences.

- 1 His PhD assignment was 90,000 words long and was on the history of US place names.
- 2 Little Martha did her first dissertation in school today. It was called 'My family'.
- 3 We have to hand in an essay at the end of the course. It can consist of up to five different pieces of work.
- 4 The teacher gave us the title of this week's project today. We have to write 1,000 words on the topic of 'If I ruled the world' and hand it in next Monday.
- 5 At the end of this course, you have to do a 5,000-word thesis which will be assessed, and the grade will contribute to your final degree.
- 6 I think I'll do a study of people's personal banking habits for my MSc composition. It has to be about 12,000 words.
- 7 I've chosen to do the portfolio instead of the two exams, because I like to do one single piece of work where I can research something that interests me personally.

### 1.2 Rewrite this text using words and phrases from the opposite page instead of the underlined words.

When I'm studying in a very focused way because I'm preparing hard for an exam, I don't see any point in looking up exam papers from previous years, nor is there any point in just learning things by memory. I know some people develop very clever memory tricks to help them remember the material, but there's no real substitute for rereading and going over the term's work. It's a good idea to have some sort of diagram showing different ideas to organise your thoughts, and memory-learning is useful, but in a limited way. At the end of the day, you just have to read a huge amount until you feel you know the subject 100%.



### 1.3 Answer these questions.

- 1 What do we call the first attempt at writing something, e.g. an essay?
- 2 What word means 'the date by which you must do something'?
- 3 What word means 'using someone else's ideas as if they were yours'?
- 4 What are more formal words for 'to hand in' and for 'to mark'?
- 5 What phrasal verb do we use when someone doesn't complete their course?
- 6 What is another word for an academic article? Where can you read them?
- 7 What is the name of the system for getting books from other libraries?
- 8 What word means 'the comments you get back from the teacher about your work'?
- 9 What word can you use for a person who is extraordinarily intelligent?
- 10 What is a more formal way of saying 'do research'?

### 1.4 Choose the best word from the opposite page to complete these sentences.

- 1 If you quote an article in an essay, you must ..... your source, giving details of author and title.
- 2 Open educational ..... can be particularly useful for students who do not have easy access to a university library.
- 3 How much ..... have you done for tomorrow's maths exam?
- 4 Don't forget to sign the ..... form and hand it in with your dissertation.
- 5 Some people take a long time to find suitable work even though they are very .....
- 6 Orla has had a ..... published in the *British Medical Journal*.
- 7 All students need a username and password to be able to ..... journals online.
- 8 Caspar is bound to do well in his mechanics exam – he knows the subject ..... out.

# Answer key

## Unit 1

- 1.1**
- 1 His PhD **thesis** ...
  - 2 Little Martha did her first **composition** ...
  - 3 We have to hand in a **portfolio** ...
  - 4 The teacher gave us the title of this week's **essay** ...
  - 5 At the end of this course you have to do a 5,000-word **assignment** ...
  - 6 I think I'll do a study of people's personal banking habits for my MSc **dissertation** ...
  - 7 I've chosen to do the **project** ...
- 1.2** When I'm studying **intensively** because I'm **cramming** for an exam, I don't see any point in looking up **past papers**, nor is there any point in just learning things **(off) by heart**. I know some people develop very clever **mnemonics** to help them remember the material, but there's no real substitute for **revising** the term's work. It's a good idea to have some sort of **mind map** to organise your thoughts, and **rote-learning** / **memorising** is useful, but in a limited way. At the end of the day, you just have to **bury yourself in your books** until you feel you know the subject **inside out**.
- 1.3**
- 1 a first draft
  - 2 a deadline
  - 3 plagiarism
  - 4 submit; assess
  - 5 drop out
  - 6 a paper; in (academic) journals
  - 7 inter-library loan
  - 8 feedback
  - 9 a genius
  - 10 carry out research
- 1.4**
- 1 acknowledge
  - 2 resources
  - 3 revision
  - 4 plagiarism
  - 5 well-qualified
  - 6 paper
  - 7 access
  - 8 inside

## Exercises

2

- 1.1** Read the beginning of this story and label the type of formulaic language used in the words in bold. Use the information in A opposite to help you.

In 2009, I **set off** on a long journey. As I left my house, my neighbour shouted, 'Good luck!' I didn't know **at that moment** that I would not see him again for three years. I **boarded the plane** at Heathrow, and soon it **took off** for Malaysia. When we **touched down** in Kuala Lumpur, I couldn't wait to **get off** the plane. I **took a bus** to the **city centre** and **spent the night** at a **youth hostel**. The first person I met was someone I had been at school with years ago. 'It's a **small world!**' he said when he saw me.



- 1.2** Underline the seven idioms in the rest of the story you read in 1.1.

My friend suggested that we join forces. 'There's safety in numbers,' he said. 'Let's hit the road together.' I was in two minds whether to go with him but finally decided to say yes. We travelled together for six months and had a whale of a time. We spent money like there was no tomorrow. I had to twist my dad's arm and persuade him to send me some more money so I could travel further.

- 1.3** Choose the correct answer.

- 1 His first novel was just a) a flash in a pan b) a flash of the pan c) a flash in the pan.
- 2 I think Philip has a) given a shine to b) taken a shine to c) got a shine to his new babysitter.
- 3 I hope you have a good trip and come home a) safely and soundly b) sound and safe c) safe and sound.
- 4 Oh dear! I think I've a) had a foot in it b) put my foot in it c) got my foot in it!
- 5 Kate is really noisy, but her best friend is a) as quiet as a cat b) as quiet as a mouse c) as quiet like a mouse.

- 1.4** Look at these newspaper headlines. Each one has an idiom based on a part of the human body. What do you think they mean? Choose the correct answer.

1 University **goes cap in hand** to finance minister

3 Rita Soraz is **the apple of** Hollywood's eye

2 Airline **foots the bill** for delays and cancellations

4 Government is **burying its head in the sand**, says Opposition leader

- 1 A university a) apologises to the minister b) asks the minister for financial help c) awards the minister a great honour.
- 2 An airline a) has refused to pay the costs b) sends the bill to someone else c) will pay the costs.
- 3 Rita Soraz is a) loved by everyone in Hollywood b) hated by everyone in Hollywood c) missed by everyone in Hollywood.
- 4 The government is a) refusing to face a difficult situation b) about to resign c) making unpopular plans.

# Key

## Unit 1

**1.1** In 2009, I **set off** (phrasal verb) on a long journey. As I left my house, my neighbour shouted, '**Good luck!**' (greetings and good wishes) I didn't know **at that moment** (prepositional phrase) that I would not see him again for three years. I **boarded the plane** (collocation) at Heathrow, and soon it **took off** (phrasal verb) for Malaysia. When we **touched down** (phrasal verb) in Kuala Lumpur, I couldn't wait to **get off** (phrasal verb) the plane. I **took a bus** (collocation) to the **city centre** (compound) and **spent the night** (collocation) at a **youth hostel** (compound). The first person I met was someone I had been **at school** (prepositional phrase) with years ago. '**It's a small world!**' (saying or proverb) he said when he saw me.

**1.2** My friend suggested that we join forces. 'There's safety in numbers,' he said. 'Let's hit the road together.' I was in two minds whether to go with him but finally decided to say yes. We travelled together for six months and had a whale of a time. We spent money like there was no tomorrow. I had to twist my dad's arm and persuade him to send me some more money so I could travel further.

- 1.3**
- 1 c) a flash in the pan
  - 2 b) taken a shine to
  - 3 c) safe and sound
  - 4 b) put my foot in it
  - 5 b) as quiet as a mouse

- 1.4** 1 b    2 c    3 a    4 a