

# Tailor your textbook – and be ‘on point’ in the New Year!

What better way to start a new year than with a new approach to your textbook? Read how Margaret Helliwell has done just this and find inspiration for your next lessons.

Most VHS language-course teachers will have encountered the same difficulties as I have – how to find a textbook that is suitable for classes that have a wide range of ages and interests? In my current VHS upper-intermediate and advanced English courses, the students’ ages in each group range from mid-twenties to mid-seventies!

This means not only that language levels are heterogeneous, but that interests vary widely, so finding the right textbook is problematic. No matter how modern and innovative the topics in a textbook may be, in a course where, for example, the majority of the participants are pensioners, topics such as ‘Pros and cons of having children’, or ‘What kind of further education should I get?’ will produce nothing but giggles at best and yawns at worst.

## Take up the challenge

As many textbooks – including *On Point* – are comprehensive and provide practice in listening-speaking-reading-writing skills, they contain

certain elements that my VHS students in general do not require, e.g. writing. However, that is no reason not to ‘doctor’ the textbook to suit the needs of the class. Although “because it’s there” may have been an excellent answer when George Mallory was asked why he wanted to climb Everest, ploughing through the pages of a textbook “because it’s there” is not necessarily a good idea. As there is no book specifically designed to meet the needs of any specific class, I decided to tailor our current textbooks to fit the classes rather than expecting the classes to adapt to the books.

So you, too, may like to take up the challenge in 2023 to modify your chosen textbooks to more closely meet the particular needs of your classes, and I hope some of my ideas will inspire you.

## Non-linear approach with *On Point*

How did I adapt my currently favourite textbooks *On Point Upper Intermediate English* and *On Point Advanced English* within the constraints of my VHS courses? At these upper levels teaching and learning is usually a question of grammar revision, and vocabulary revision and extension rather than a progressive acquisition of grammar and basic vocabulary; thus it is really not necessary to progress chronologically through the text book.

## ‘Metapanning’

Therefore, I focus first on the topics. I start each course with a kind of ‘metapanning’, a method for collecting and processing ideas and opinions when a group of people are working together. The students are given about 10 minutes to browse through the book and especially to focus on the contents pages. Then they are asked to choose the three topics that interest them most and make a note of them. When they have done so, I ask for the students’ votes for each topic and collect them on the whiteboard or flipchart. In the *On Point Advanced English* class this autumn semester in a class of twelve, the top three were:

**Unit 6 Travel: 8 votes**

### 6B New places



Note: Most of the students had just returned from holiday and were keen to talk about their experiences.

*“The students are highly motivated, having ‘designed’ the course themselves.”*



## Zur Autorin

Margaret Helliwell war lange Zeit Englischlehrerin in der Erwachsenenbildung (Bundestag und Bundesministerien / Berlin) und arbeitet jetzt im „Unruhestand“ an der Volkshochschule Schwerin

## Contents

## Contents

	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading / Listening	Speaking / Writing
<b>1 The mind</b>				
1A Memory	p6	Tense review (active and passive)	Our amazing brain	Talking about success and challenges
1B Future memories	p9	Future forms	Memories	A reference
1C Never forget	p12	Memories	Future trends	
1D Experiences	p14	Memories	Memories predict the future	
			Remembering everything	
<b>2 Work</b> * 3				
2A Working conditions	p16	Modal verbs and expressions	Working in a lab	A debate
2B Motivation	p19	Past modals	The life of a servant	Idioms for debating
2C Rule breakers	p22	Concession clauses	Factors affecting productivity	A for and against essay
2D Job satisfaction	p24	Phrasal verbs with off and up	How to motivate a team	Presenting arguments
			Does it pay to break the rules?	
<b>Video: Memorization</b>	p26			
<b>3 History</b> * 2				
3A Lifesavers	p28	Linking devices	Life saving inventions	Comparing and speculating about photos
3B Make that change	p31	Past and present habits	Two women whose inventions saved lives	A nomination
3C Give credit	p34	Word families; health	How to consign your old self to history	Describing achievements, influence and reputation
3D The lives of others	p36	Lifestyle idioms	Habits – old and new	
		Business and money	Credit where credit's due	
<b>4 People</b>				
4A Gossip	p38	Adverbs and adverbials	Why we gossip	Expressing strong feelings
4B Influence	p41	Structures with get	Gossiping	An essay
4C Personality	p44	Similes and metaphors	Could you just ...?	Expressing your point of view
4D Opinions	p46	Phrases with get	How to make people like you	
		Personality	Personality – what's your type?	
<b>Video: Rise and fall</b>	p48			
<b>5 Family</b>				
5A Parents and children	p50	Verb patterns	Boomerang kids	Arguing
5B Life choices	p53	Future in the past	Family relationships	Idioms related to arguments
5C From child to adult	p56	Disagreements	Decisions, Decisions!	A problem and solution article
5D Divisions	p58	Decisions	Life-changing decisions	Idioms to discuss problems
		Behaviour	From child to adult	

	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading / Listening	Speaking / Writing
<b>6 Travel</b> * 1				
6A Unique places	p60	Particle clauses and relative clauses	The Galapagos islands	Complaining and apologizing
6B New places	p63	Introductions	Interview with a travel writer	A travel article
6C Ancient travel	p66	Describing places (1)	Describing a trip	Colourful language
6D My journeys	p68	Describing places (2)	The rise and fall of the guidebook	
		Travel adjectives	The Silk Road	
<b>Video: Saving diversity</b>	p70			
<b>7 Transformation</b>				
7A Becoming successful	p72	Ellipsis and substitution	Making it	Giving a presentation
7B Innovation	p75	Determiners and quantifiers	Inventions that changed the world	Presenting a proposal
7C Gentrification	p78	Technology	Future technologies	An article
7D What's new?	p80	Change	Taking over	Describing changes to a place
<b>8 Celebrity</b>				
8A Celebrating ignorance	p82	Cleft sentences	The success of stupidity	A discussion about reality TV shows
8B In the public eye	p85	Inversion	A radio debate	Exaggeration and understatement
8C Being famous	p88	Idioms for expressing opinions	How private are you?	A film review
8D Under the spotlight	p90	Idioms related to secrets	Stars who hide	Evocative language
		Fame	Fame at what cost?	
<b>Video: Changes</b>	p92			
<b>9 Decisions</b>				
9A Risk and regret	p94	Third and mixed conditionals	It's risky getting old	Discussing moral dilemmas
9B Right or wrong?	p97	Distancing yourself from facts	Regrets	Idioms for actions and behaviour
9C Should you ever ...?	p100	Risk	Quiz: What would you do?	A discussion essay
9D Moral dilemmas	p102	Truth and lies	Morals in animals	Expressing other people's opinions
		Reactions and responses	Moral dilemmas in tourism	
<b>10 Conflict</b>				
10A It's your fault	p104	Past tenses for unreal situations	Reasons to argue	Managing conflict
10B Always right, never wrong!	p107	The grammar of phrasal verbs	Arguments	A formal letter of objection
10C Conflict and social change	p110	Phrasal verbs	People who are always right	Raising concerns formally
10D Taking action	p112	Idioms for opinions	Cognitive dissonance	
		Revolution	Animal farm	
<b>Video: Drama</b>	p114			

Grammar Reference p116

Communication bank p128

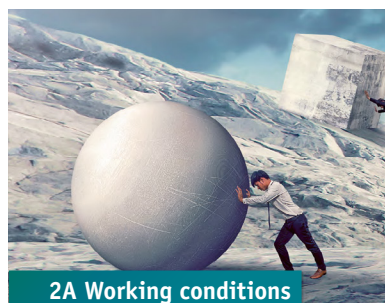
Audio Scripts p132

## Unit 3 History: 5 votes



**Note:** This is a unit with wide-appeal as it covers so many different topics within the topic.

## Unit 2 Work: 4 votes



2A Working conditions

**Note:** Although more than half the class are no longer part of the workforce, they can speak from experience.

## Highly motivated

Using the information gathered in this way, we can cover the units in the book in order of their popularity. By using this approach, I can ensure that I am meeting the students' needs and sustaining their interest. And the students are highly motivated, having 'designed' the course themselves.

## Challenging times

An additional challenge in VHS courses is the time limitation – in our case 15 x 90 minutes per semester – so how else can I deal with the material the book offers?

## Dealing with grammar topics

Within the units, I mostly used the material in the order suggested – apart from the grammar and some of the other language exercises. Most of my VHS students who attend a once-a-week lesson don't want to spend a lot of class time on grammar, so I suggest they do the grammar exercises for homework using the grammar reference section

at the back of the book. They can check most of the exercises themselves with the aid of the *Delta Augmented app* – which the students really love. Those they can't check themselves can be quickly covered in the next lesson. Keener students can also follow up with additional Workbook exercises, which they can also correct themselves.

## More effective – more motivating

Adapting the course book in this way is easy to do and makes your lessons more effective and motivating. So try it – it's a great way to start a new semester and a new year.



## MEHR ENTDECKEN

On Point Advanced English (C1)  
Advanced English  
ISBN 978-3-12-501278-3  
[www.klett-sprachen.de/on-point](http://www.klett-sprachen.de/on-point)