

Different Words ... Same Meaning

There was a time when 'examination preparation' consisted of little more than working through past examination papers, and hoping that familiarity with the questions would automatically improve students' performance. Things have improved since then, and every textbook offers tips, techniques, and training in 'exam skills'.

However, there are some who question the validity of such 'skills', and who see them as ways of training students to jump through the hoops of the exam without really improving their English. Obviously the ideal exam technique is one which not only helps students to tackle the exam question, but also carries over into the real world outside the exam room.

A good example of this can be found in the Cambridge PET exam. The principle is "Different Words // Same Meaning", and it is perhaps not so much a technique as a way of thinking, or a habit - one which will help students perform better in the exam in at least three specific sections, and will also help them in their everyday use of English.

Are you a Cambridge PET candidate?

Are you taking the Cambridge PET exam?

Are you hoping to pass the Cambridge PET exam?

Here's a TIP for you! Let me give you a TIP! Can I give you a TIP?

Practise saying the same thing in different words!

It will help you to answer some of the exam questions

PET Reading, Part 1: [Deciding on the meaning of a short notice by choosing from three answers **A B** or **C**] **TIP!** Don't look at the three answers yet. Look at the notice, and try to say what it means **in your own words**. **Now** look at the three options. Which one is most similar to your own answer?

PET Reading, Part 4: [Multiple choice again, this time with four options]. Read the text, look at the **Questions** (not the four optional answers), answer the questions **in your own words**, then match your answer with one of the multiple-choice answers.

PET Writing: Part 1. [Reading a sentence, and then completing a second sentence so that it means the same as the first one]. Look at these examples of **changing the words** in a sentence **without** **changing the meaning**:

*Everybody **hates** getting up early*
*Nobody **likes** getting up early*

Whose book is this?
*Who does this book **belong to**?*

*A few hours' shopping **is tiring** for most people*
*Most people **are tired** after a few hours' shopping*

PET Speaking, Part 4: [Talking with your partner about a pictorial theme]
As one of the ways to keep the discussion going, take something your partner says, and change the words, but not the meaning:

*'My **favourite** music is jazz'*
*'Oh. Why **do you like** jazz so much?'*

So there's a TIP for PET – get into the habit of thinking '**Change the words**, but **not the meaning**' And the best of luck in the exam!

Or, to put that another way,