

# The thinking behind *English Unlimited*

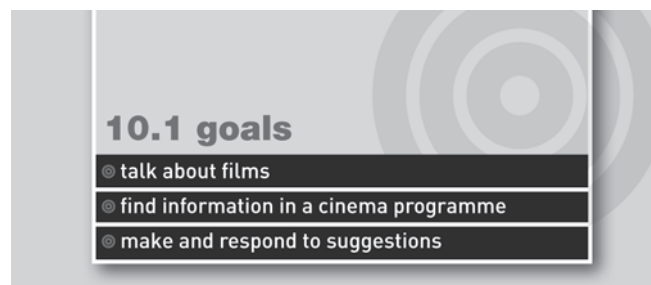
## The aim of *English Unlimited*

The aim of *English Unlimited* is to enable adult learners to communicate effectively in English in real situations. To achieve this, *English Unlimited* is:

- 1 a **practical** course
- 2 an **authentic** course
- 3 an **international** course
- 4 a **flexible** course

## 1 A practical course

Each unit of *English Unlimited* is designed to help learners achieve specific communicative goals. These goals are listed at relevant points throughout the Coursebook. For example, you and your learners will see these goals at the top of the first lesson in unit 10:



All the goals are of a practical ‘can-do’ nature, chosen to enable Elementary level learners to deal with a wide range of situations in English. Of course, a substantial amount of each unit is dedicated to learning vocabulary and grammar – but the goals come first. We’ve identified goals which we think will be useful for Elementary level learners to work on, and then selected vocabulary and grammar to help them do this.

*Where exactly do the goals come from?*

The goals for the course have been taken from the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF)**, and adapted and supplemented according to our research into the needs of Elementary level learners.

The goals in the Coursebook are based on the CEF goals but have been reworded to make them less ‘technical’ and more motivating and accessible for learners and teachers.

*What is the CEF?*

The CEF uses ‘can-do’ statements to describe the abilities of learners of English (or any other language) at different levels. The focus is on **how to do things in the language**, rather than on abstract knowledge of the language itself. For example, here are some CEF goals which describe learners’ speaking abilities at the end of Elementary:

- Can handle very short social exchanges but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord, though he/she can be made to understand if the speaker will take the trouble.
- Can use simple, everyday polite forms of greeting and address.
- Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions and apologies.
- Can say what he/she likes and dislikes.

The CEF originated in Europe but is used increasingly widely around the world as a guide for curriculum design and assessment. It can be used with learners of any nationality or first language.

*What’s the level of the course?*

The CEF is divided into 6 main **levels**, sometimes with ‘plus’ levels in between. This table shows the CEF levels and how they relate to the Cambridge ESOL exams:

CEF levels		Cambridge exams
C2	‘Mastery’	CPE
C1	‘Operational proficiency’	CAE
B2+		
B2	‘Vantage’	FCE
B1+		
B1	‘Threshold’	PET
A2+		
A2	‘Waystage’	KET
A1	‘Breakthrough’	

*English Unlimited Elementary* reviews elements of A1 (Starter level), **completes A2**, and moves well into A2+.

## 2 An authentic course

Because it is based on practical goals, *English Unlimited* teaches authentic language – that is, the kind of language which is really used by native speakers and proficient non-native speakers of English in everyday situations.

An important tool for identifying useful language to include in the course has been the **Cambridge International Corpus (CIC)**.

*What is the CIC?*

The CIC is an electronic collection of more than a billion words of real text, both spoken and written, which can be searched by computer to discover the most common words, expressions and structures of the language, and the kinds of situations in which they are used.

*How has it been used in the course?*

The CIC has been used throughout *English Unlimited* to ensure that, as far as possible given the level of the course, learners are taught **the most frequent and useful words and expressions** for meeting their communicative goals.

The CIC has also been used in the preparation of **grammar** sections to identify realistic contexts for presenting particular structures. For example, corpus research suggests that a common use of the past simple is ‘checking something was done’ (unit 4), while the present progressive is often used for the function of ‘saying you’re busy’ (unit 7).

A further use of the CIC is in the **Keyword sections** which appear in every unit. Each Keyword section focuses on one or more of the most frequently-used words in English, and teaches its most common meanings, as well as useful expressions based around it.

*How else is English Unlimited an authentic course?*

In addition to being informed by the CIC, *English Unlimited* contains a large amount of **unscripted audio and video material**, recorded using non-actors, both native and non-native speakers. Many other listening texts have been scripted from recordings of real conversations.

*What are the benefits for learners of using 'authentic' listening material?*

Listening to spontaneous, unscripted speech is the best way to prepare learners for the experience of understanding and communicating in English in the real world. Our observations have shown not only that Elementary level learners are capable of following spontaneous speech, but that authentic recordings are more motivating and engaging for learners in general.

### 3 An international course

*In what ways is English Unlimited 'international'?*

Firstly, *English Unlimited* is an **inclusive** course, catering to learners of different backgrounds from all around the world. We have taken care to select topics, texts and tasks which will appeal to a broad range of learners. We've tried to avoid topics which learners may find uncomfortable, or simply uninteresting, and we don't assume a knowledge of a celebrity culture, but focus instead on more universal themes, accessible to all.

*English is most often used nowadays between non-native speakers from different places. How does the course take this into account?*

A second strand to the 'internationalism' of the course is that it includes features which will help learners become more effective communicators in international contexts.

In every odd-numbered unit there is an **Across cultures** section which focuses on a particular topic of cultural interest. The aim of these sections is to increase learners' awareness of how the values and assumptions of the people who they communicate with in English might differ from their own. Learners who have this awareness will be more sensitive and effective communicators in international environments.

Listening sections use recordings of **speakers with a range of accents**, in order to familiarise learners with the experience of hearing both native and non-native speakers from a wide variety of places. Regardless of accents, care has been taken to ensure that recordings are of appropriate speed and clarity for learners at this level, and that they are error-free. All non-native speakers are competent users of English and should provide learners with strong and motivating role models to help them progress and achieve greater confidence in English.

For the purposes of **language production**, taught grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation follow a British English model, but by exposing learners to a wide range of accents and models, we are helping to enhance their ability to use English in real international contexts.

### 4 A flexible course

The next four pages show how a typical unit of *English Unlimited* is organised.

As you'll see, the first five pages are connected to each other and make up the 'core' of the unit. After that, there is the **Explore** section, two pages of activities which have a topical or linguistic link to the unit, but which can be used separately. On the last page of each unit is the **Look again** section, comprising review and extension activities, which can be done by learners either in the classroom or for homework.

This means that *English Unlimited* can be adapted not only for lessons of different lengths, but also for shorter and longer courses. For example, just using the 'core' of each unit would be suitable for a course of about 50 hours, while using all the material, including the **Explore** and **Look again** sections, would give a course length of 80 or 90 hours.

The flexibility of *English Unlimited* is further enhanced by an extensive range of supplementary materials. These include **extra grammar practice** at the back of the coursebook, the **Teacher's DVD-ROM** containing four printable worksheets for each unit of the Coursebook, **Achievement and Progress tests**, and the **Self-study Pack**, which offers more than 50 hours of additional language and skills practice material in the Workbook and on the Self-study DVD-ROM.

In the rest of this introduction you'll find:

- a plan showing how a unit is organised *pages 6 to 10*
- more detailed notes on the different sections of the units *pages 11 to 15*
- information about the other components of the course *pages 16 to 19*
- more detailed information about the CEF *page 20*

We hope that you and your learners will enjoy using *English Unlimited*!

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