

Introduction to in English

by Peter Viney



The Authors

Peter Viney and Karen Viney have written several key OUP courses. Peter co-wrote Streamline English and American Streamline with Bernard Hartley, and was responsible for adapting and updating the series as New American Streamline. Peter was also co-series editor of Streamline Graded Readers which were republished as Storylines.

Peter and Karen wrote the Streamline videos, A Weekend Away and A Week By The Sea which defined the Activity Book format of most subsequent video courses. They then wrote the award-winning Mystery Tour. They wrote Grapevine, the first course with an integrated video element and went on to develop Main Street with the accompanying Only in America video.

Handshake at pre-intermediate level was an innovative course with a syllabus built around communication skills. They have written three ELT adaptations of the Wallace and Gromit animated films, The Wrong Trousers, A Close Shave and A Grand Day Out.

English Channel was their most recent modular video series, and was designed to be used with any course at the level. It will work perfectly with IN English.

They have been working on the IN English series for four years and the course has been extensively piloted and rewritten.

Peter and Karen have specialized in the early levels throughout their careers, and have become noted as writers of starter / elementary materials.

Peter:

“When I started teaching English full-time, I was asked which level I would prefer. Having just completed a research MA in literature, I naturally said “advanced.” My boss, the late Alan McInnes, told me that I would never learn anything about ELT unless I started with beginners, spent at least a year only with them, and then worked through the levels in the order that students experienced them. The advice was absolutely right, and Karen went through the same process. When we taught higher levels, we knew the process that the students had been through. I was in charge of a department which only taught beginner and elementary students, and I would often have 16 beginner classes in my department – multilingual and monolingual, which is why I don’t see ‘Beginners’ or ‘Starter’ as one category. The course was devised to cope with the different levels and learning speeds of starter students within the same class.”

Karen:

“The lower levels have always been our favourite levels. They’re the ones where progress is tangible, where student enthusiasm is at its highest, and where teaching skills need to be honed and practised. This course has been written in the order that students will experience it, unlike most other adult courses which have been written ‘backwards’ with the starter level appearing after the second level. We are unashamedly specialists in the early levels..”



The Design

IN English has been designed by Richard Morris, who turned the look of the ELT book completely around when he designed the original Streamline. For IN English, he has come up with a design that is as innovative as Streamline was, and a design that has the clarity and transparency and ‘chunkability’ that Streamline had. While using a great variety of photographs and illustrations, Richard has avoided mixing styles within a page or spread, so that each page has a definite strong visual style and identity. It looks adult.

It is completely different from any other ELT book on the market. When he saw sample design pages, one Director of Studies said:

DoS (UK):

“The minute this comes out, everything else at the level is going to look overcrowded and out of date. “

What’s different about IN English?

Student Book

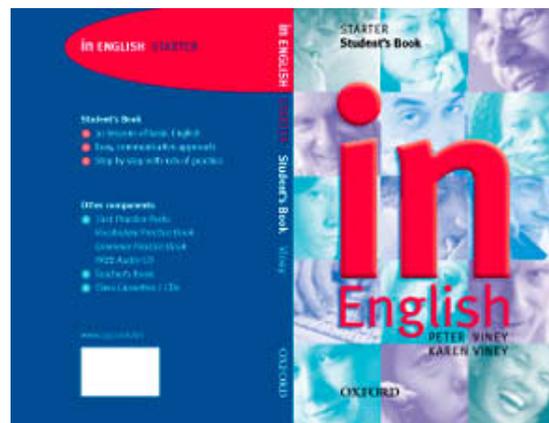
The units are short. There are **thirty units**, and each unit is divided into a number of clear, well-signposted chunks which can be taught as discrete sections.

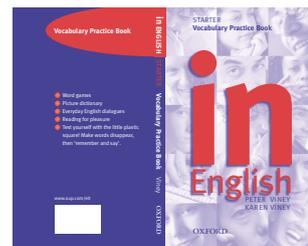
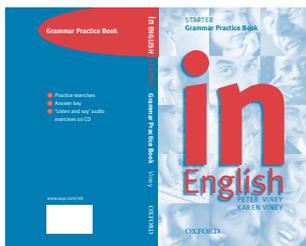
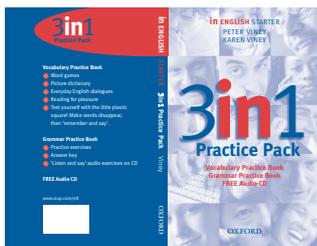
There is a **clear, transparent focus** to every unit, and each unit acts as a **minimal core** around which teachers can adapt, expand and add further activities (or not, as the case may be). The clarity and transparency are aided by the design which avoids clutter, complex references and icons.

The **sections** are clear. There are plenty of ‘stop’ points between sections which make the timing adaptable in different situations with different groups.

The course has built-in **Flexibility** through the **Extensions** section. There is one Extension unit for each main unit. The Extension contains three to five sections. Usually one is above the level for faster students, one is easier and repeats things in a different way for slower students. There is work on pronunciation features and on reading for specific information. Teachers can access these Extensions during or after the main SB lesson. They can also miss them if they don’t have enough time.

Interest-value and humour are important factors, combined with appealing, adult-oriented design.





3 IN 1 Practice Pack

The **3 IN 1 Practice Pack** allows for independent learning.

1) There is a conventional Workbook supporting the main flow of the syllabus (**Grammar Workbook**). This includes a key grammar chart.

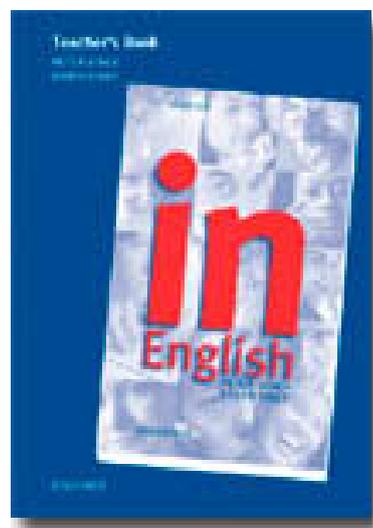
2) There is an innovative **Vocabulary Workbook** which features:

- Everyday English sections based on formulas and fixed expressions (or 'lexical chunks' if you prefer) These can be practised using a colour overlay.
- A full colour photo dictionary
- Word games and puzzles which can be done whenever the student wishes
- Reading for Pleasure games and short activities
- Selftests which can be repeated using a colour overlay.

3) There is a free **Audio Exercises CD**. The importance of short mechanical activities for beginners has been under-estimated in recent years. This audio CD fulfils an often repeated student request for practice, without taking up classroom time. (It could also be used in Language laboratories or mini-labs).

Teacher's Book

1) Notes. This contains the Teacher's notes for the Student Book units and extensions. The notes are step-by-step as in Streamline and Grapevine, and add the background notes and added information that was a popular feature of Handshake Teacher's Book. We feel that a lot of genuine communication in the classroom comes from teachers adding information to the text in their own words. We have, as in the past, confined some transfer stages, question sequences and games to the teacher's book, so that in the classroom these activities arrive fresh and framed in the teacher's own words. This is far more stimulating than ploughing steadily through everything on the Student Book printed page. The over-riding concern has been to allow **teacher choice**. **Teacher independence**, if you will, as well as learner independence.



2) There is a detailed introduction on techniques. The Times Educational Supplement described the Grapevine equivalent as a mini teacher training course and as essential reading for training courses.

3) Tests. These are photocopiable.

4) Photocopiable masters, with a great variety of activities, add even greater flexibility to the course.

Syllabus coverage

In designing our Starter syllabus we have taken into account three important issues:

- the student's need for progress
- the student's desire for completion
- the need to avoid overload

The student's need for progress

Any approach to Starter level involves work with a carefully graded syllabus progression from simple to complex. In a starter programme where students have no prior knowledge, and are commencing four or five years study, the 'simple to complex' logical progression would dictate the syllabus. But many students inevitably know some English. One estimate was that every European adult knew at least 300 English words before starting to learn English.

These "starter" students will want to make rapid progress and gain a grasp (albeit a tentative one) of major areas of the language which have communicative relevance. We assume that at starter level students want to get far enough into the syllabus to reach the past tense.

The solution to making rapid progress is to leave some deliberate holes in the syllabus, which can be filled in at the next level. In this course we have deliberately avoided these major areas at Starter. This will enable students at the Elementary level to experience new structural items while revising the basics from the Starter level.

- a full account of countable and uncountable nouns
- frequency adverbs
- adverbs of manner
- possessive pronouns

The student's desire for completion

We have always found that students react against the separation of language into unnatural blocks. Although this reduces the early language load, it tends to restrict what the students recognise they want to say.

For example, we would not expect to be able to confine practice of a structure to the first and second person. Unless the third person is introduced at the same time, classroom activity is limited to an unacceptable degree. The student knows that there must be something for all the persons. They're waiting for it. You can't say "Sorry, he and she are tomorrow's unit."

The recent fashion has been to teach (e.g.) I, you, we, they do in one unit. He / she / it does in a subsequent unit. Teachers go to great lengths to avoid the next set of persons. They fight to confine the lesson to I, you, we, they. They can't say What about him / her? What does he think? Does she agree? etc because they're avoiding he / she. This kind of division made sense in teaching most European languages, but English is not a structurally complex language. There are only two shifts in English in these cases (has/have; do / does); three shifts with be (am / is / are) and from then on no shifts to worry about. For students whose language has six or seven shifts, this is easy, even for beginners.

For the same reason, we have always introduced affirmative, negative, and question together. This enables the teacher to employ the full range of activities from the outset. Inevitably, students will want to negate or question. Inevitably the teacher will use negatives and questions in the lesson.

Avoiding overload

Although students are usually well-motivated at Starter level, any course must take into account how quickly students are building up a large amount of language to process. Constant reinforcement and recycling are crucial if students are not to become demotivated when they can no longer cope with the language load. This course is designed 'organically' to cover core language in a logical progression, without artificial syllabus goals; each Unit includes a manageable amount of language in small building blocks, as well as study-alone components to help students review or work ahead at their own pace.

Speed of Progression

Within our aim of flexibility, we have allowed for different learning paces as well as different learning styles.

The Extension enables teachers to 'speed up' for faster learners, or to 'slow down' for slower learners.

The structural comparison chart indicates in the broadest terms that the course goes faster than (e.g.) Headstart or Reward Starter, but slower than Streamline or Interchange. IN English is designed to give a sense of achievement by keeping moving at a reasonable pace without overloading. We felt it is essential to "get to" the past simple at the level, and to give students tools with which to talk about the future. These concepts are in the students' minds before they commence a starter course and cannot be overlooked.

There is a strong cyclical element to allow over-learning and to give students a second chance to grasp important concepts. If they miss a lesson, it will not be a disaster. They will meet the area again.

The syllabus is reviewed thoroughly during the first half of the second level, IN English Elementary .

Activity types

There isn't a single IN English 'method'. Our work on Handshake has led us to consider both multiple intelligences and learner styles. Some people are visual learners, some are auditory learners and some are kinaesthetic learners. We have included activities which should appeal to the great variety of learning styles, which means there are some 'fashionable' activities as well as 'unfashionable' activities! The latter category, i.e. more mechanical work, tends to be confined to the Teacher's notes so that individual teachers can exercise choice. The student audio CD contains simple, clear mechanical activities.

In the same way, we have used more unusual approaches within the Teacher's notes so that teachers can try different ways of exploiting the core material without being forced to do so.

Grammar

Language focus sections on the student page are clearly marked and separated from the text by coloured boxes and each has a short exercise summarising the key points.

The student book contains a **Grammar Overview** section at the back for reference. The Grammar overview combines the items from various units to explore each structure more fully.

The **3-in-1 Practice Pack** has a short **grammar reference** section.

The Grammar Workbook covers all the features of the course, but is biased towards the structural syllabus.

Extension activities help students to develop strategies to further grammar awareness.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a major feature of the course with careful coverage of key vocabulary items at the level. We also believe in using words beyond the level to add spice and interest value to the contexts, even though some of the words will be of lower frequency. In the **Extensions** there is further work on vocabulary groups.

The lexical syllabus has been the centre of attention in recent years. It is accepted by many teachers that a full approach towards collocation work is not feasible until students have acquired 1500 to 2000 basic words, but the **Photo dictionary** sections in the Vocabulary Workbook support students in acquiring more vocabulary of their own choice at their own pace. There are some Extension activities which we would call 'pre-collocation' work to develop student awareness ahead of the subsequent levels of the series.

Formulas and **fixed expressions** have been a major syllabus strand, which is supported by the **Everyday English** section in the Vocabulary Workbook. In the main Student Book units, students will often meet and use a structure as a formula before exploring the structural implications of the formula. Therefore students use the present simple in a formulaic way from the outset via expressions like **I don't know / understand / speak (English)** and **Do you speak (Spanish)?** before they go on to approach the present simple as a full structure. The present continuous is also used in a formulaic way before full explanation. In the **Grammar Book** the 'Match questions and answers / responses' section focuses students on phrases and 'chunks' rather than individual structural words.

Skills

An Oral-Aural bias

The natural way to approach this level is by focussing more heavily on Speaking and Listening than on Reading and Writing.

There are Reading development strategies from the outset, and there is limited work on Writing in the Workbooks, but we do not believe that it is appropriate to give equal weight to the skills ('balanced skills') at this level. The balance shifts at Elementary and shifts further at Pre-Intermediate level. We are convinced that adults will progress faster with an oral / aural bias in the materials. As many starter students have had one or more 'false starts' in the past, their demand is for something more active and immediate.

The 3-in-1 Practice pack gives a great deal of further reading practice, in the most appropriate place, where students can work at their own pace.

We do pay attention throughout the extensions to the fifth skill, Learning how to learn.

There are four authentic songs in the course.

Pronunciation

When we piloted there was almost an exact 50/50 division between those who wanted more overt pronunciation work and those who wanted less. This is reflected as we meet teachers and discuss techniques. Some people believe in using the phonetic chart from the beginning, others believe it confuses. Neither side has a clear majority.

We have taken a pragmatic view. In the Starter level there are many activities to support teachers who do wish to use phonetics. But at Starter level, we make no assumption that teachers will use phonetics, nor do we have a consistent programme for teaching phonetics in the Starter level. However, we do have a consistent programme in the forthcoming Elementary level, located in the Extensions.

Wherever phonetics are used in the course, they are printed in blue so as to separate them from normal text.

Wherever we feel that features of stress, intonation and pronunciation contribute to meaning, they are in the core SB lesson.

There are further pronunciation activities in most of the Extension units, and these will be the first port of call for those teachers in the 'more pronunciation' group.

We have been interested in recent studies of 'non-native to non-native' communication, and have not focussed on pronunciation features which merely replicate local features of RP Southern British English (such as a weak stress on the second syllable of Monday, Tuesday etc). We have communication as the main aim and accept that learners may over stress regular past endings and use other 'non-native' stress features to enhance the clarity of what they are saying at this level.

The **audio** element of the course is presented at the lower end of natural speed with a variety of regional and national accents. There are American, Australian and British regional voices on the tape. While extreme accents are avoided, all our experience leads us to conclude that a variety of input is essential.

Tie-ins: VIDEO

Integrating video with the course

Peter & Karen Viney have published six video OUP courses at the Starter / Elementary level:

A Weekend Away, The Wrong Trousers, A Grand Day Out,
Grapevine One, English Channel One and Only in America (American English).

Our video courses have short, separate comedy situations without a continuing story and so can be adapted for use with this course.

The existence of parallel series means that you can use some of the videos at Starter, and still have plenty of choice at Elementary level. We would suggest using either Grapevine One or English Channel One with the Starter level, and the other one at Elementary level. Only in America would be suitable for either, and adds variety even if you are not primarily teaching American English.

Videos in order of difficulty:

EARLY STARTER / YOUNGER

A Grand Day Out

STARTER- first half of the syllabus

The Wrong Trousers

STARTER (perfect for IN English Starter) – three parallel series

Grapevine One / Only in America / English Channel One

FASTER STARTER / ELEMENTARY

A Weekend Away

Tie-ins: GRADED READERS

Storylines level one will work very well with IN English. (Peter Viney is one of the series editor, and wrote many of the titles).

Towards the end, faster students could move on to Level two.

