

ESOL BOOKS

*Self-study tools for
intermediate + groups*



esolbooks.com

Introduction



Hi, I'm Dave. I'm an ESOL teacher and teacher trainer based in an FE college in Glasgow. I'm also the author of the **Read and Write every day** series for basic ESOL Literacy groups (pre-entry).

About this sample

I was flattered that NATECLA Scotland invited me to host a webinar entitled ***I want my students to go away!*** The aim of the session was to share my enthusiasm regarding the power of self-study to unlock students' progress towards achieving their goals. [You can watch a recording on YouTube!](#)

This sample features:

1. Tips for how to encourage self-study in intermediate plus groups.
2. A worksheet to use with learners packed with ideas for self-study.

Sample units from the **Read and Write every day** series can be downloaded from esolbooks.com.

Feedback

We'd love to know what you think of this sample unit! Please comment under the blog post or contact me to give me your feedback:
davebutler@esolbooks.com.

The power of self-study

The students who I have seen make significant progress all have one trait in common: they embrace self-study. Here are my tips for encouraging self-study for students, focusing mostly here on intermediate and upper-intermediate learners.

Mindset

Get students on board when it comes to self-study. To initiate a class discussion, I set the learners up in small groups with this task:

Do you agree?

1. You don't need to study at home if you go to college every day.
2. If you have a busy life then teachers shouldn't ask you to do homework.
3. It's a good idea to plan when and where you can do self-study.
4. Self-study is boring! I want to have fun in my free time!
5. I'm going to study hard at college and at home to improve my English.
6. Spend more time on areas which are difficult for you.

This helps to set the tone for the year ahead. It also helps clarify the following:

- Signing up for college includes a commitment to homework as well as classwork.
- Get organised – where and when should you study (straight after class? When the kids are in bed?)?
- Spend more time on the areas you are weaker at.

Make homework a habit

Set homework at the end of every class and check it at the beginning of the next lesson. Generally speaking, consolidate work focused on in class, e.g. give some tasks from the Workbook which accompanies your coursebook, find extra grammar practice for the day's language point from a book like *Essential Grammar in Use*.

Here's my process for setting and checking homework:

1. After a lesson using the Student's Book, set some pages for homework.
2. At the start of the next class, the learners check their answers in pairs. Students can dive deeper into responses where they disagree!
3. Monitor while the learners are checking and encourage self-correction, e.g. "numbers 1-3 are correct, well done! Change your answer to number 4."
4. Check all the answers in open-class feedback. Address any common errors. Are there any areas where you could run some remedial work, e.g. extra practice of a grammar point?

Library visit

If you have a college library with graded readers, then this is a great opportunity for self-study. In addition, show your students popular self-study books for ESOL students such as *English Vocabulary in Use*, *English Grammar in Use* and *Oxford Word Skills*. Books with exam practice will appeal to some (e.g. the Cambridge exams such as FCE, IELTS etc).

Encourage students to read books and magazines for native speakers too, especially a magazine related to an interest of theirs. Books for young learners might appeal here too as the English is a little easier.

Refer to these books in class now and again, e.g. run discussions in small groups: Which books do you have from the library just now? Would you recommend them? Why / why not?

Independent self-study

I created the worksheet which you can find later in this document to give my students a host of tools to use. Here is how I'm using this with my learners:

1. Class discussion: what do you do at home to learn English? Some great ideas always emerge, e.g. "I speak to myself"; "I upload my writing to Chat GPT and it corrects it"; "I have joined a football team."
2. Tell the group about methods you have found useful. For me this is flash cards, language exchanges and podcasts. A great idea mentioned at the webinar was to compare self-study with the gym. You get fit through regular work-outs, i.e. self-study needs to become part of a student's routine.
3. Give the students the **Self-study worksheet**. Set the task: 'tick the ideas which you like the most', to complete in class or as a homework task to check the following day.
4. Hopefully, many of your students will get stuck in and try the different ideas. I recommend focusing on an area and spending some time discussing the different options. For example, we have spent the last week or two focusing on listening:
 - a. The students suggested some podcasts and podcast apps they already know, e.g. BBC 6-minute English. The learners help each other to download apps and find podcasts.
 - b. Point out that if they search 'learn English intermediate' online/on a podcast app then they will find a huge number of great podcasts. It's then a case of trying them out until you find one you like.
 - c. Discuss the different possibilities here. Busy students may suggest the option of listening while doing housework, which is great if the podcast isn't too challenging. However, if students want to push themselves, as they should be doing, then it's necessary to sit down and pay attention! You'll reap the rewards of listening to something more challenging while taking notes. Listening to this again while doing household chores is then an option.

- d. Set homework to build the habit of self-study and train the students. I found an interesting podcast on culture shock for my upper intermediate group ('Easy English') and set this task: What are the main points they mention? Note 5 useful words/phrases (guess the spelling!). The majority of the students did this task and learned some great vocabulary. I gave them a podcast after each class that week.
- e. I'm planning to set podcasts aimed at ESOL learners for my intermediate and upper intermediate groups for the first few weeks of the year. For the latter, I am going to move onto podcasts for native speakers, e.g. TED Talks, BBC Sounds (*The People Fixing the World series* looks great, for instance). I will choose episodes which are 10-20 minutes long, seem interesting and are challenging but achievable. The homework task outlined above keeps life simple for teachers and students alike. The time commitment isn't overwhelming and the students find it to be an effective way to practise their listening and widen their vocabulary. In addition, it's hugely motivating.
5. After a week or two of listening and podcasts I plan to focus on reading and will repeat the process I followed with the focus on listening but with a mixture of worksheets (e.g. from One Stop English News lessons), apps (e.g. Readable) and websites (e.g. News in Levels).

The idea here is to train them towards **independent self-study**. With regular practice using the various tools, they can really boost their level!

AI

More and more students are eulogising about the potential of AI as a self-study tool, for example:

- Conversations with Co-pilot/Google Gemini where students can ask the AI to change accent, correct their mistakes, role play conversations etc.

- Feedback to writing tasks after uploading a document/photo of a hand-written text.

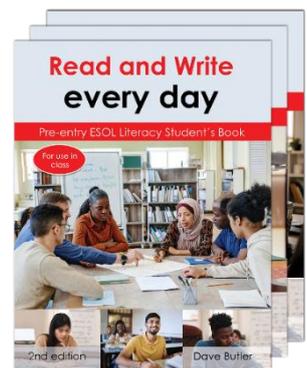
Again, some training is needed here I feel. I suspect many students will ask for feedback and correction of writing, for instance, before checking it for themselves first.

Feedback and further info.

We'd love to know what you think of this sample! Please contact me to give me your feedback: davebutler@esolbooks.com.

Visit esolbooks.com for details of our books, including:

- online bookshop
- sample units
- free extra material, e.g. Power Point slides and Kahoot games
- blog with tips, techniques, free worksheets etc
- form to join our mailing list



Self-study worksheet

The worksheet follows on the next five pages. Feel free to copy the material and use it in class with your students!

Self-study Ideas



- ✓ *Attending college is great but to reach a MORE ADVANCED LEVEL*
- ✓ *SELF-STUDY is the key to your progress!*

Self-Study Ideas

The students who make the most progress have one thing in common.....
SELF-STUDY! Look at the ideas below and answer the questions.

Writing

Look at these ideas for various different ways to practise your writing.
Which do you like the most? Tick THREE of them.

- 1. Write a diary**
Write at the end of the day about the main things you did. How was your day? If you prefer, you can write about your plans for today / tomorrow / this weekend.
- 2. Messages**
Write messages to your friends in English.
- 3. Chat with robots**
You can write and exchange messages in English with various AI apps, e.g. Copilot, Google Gemini. You can even ask the AI to correct your English!
- 4. Spelling: look-say-cover**
Write a list of words and use the 'look-say-cover' method with the words by covering the word with your hand, writing it without copying, then checking your answer! Repeat this five times for each word.
- 5. Use new vocabulary**
Write sentences about yourself using new vocabulary you have learned recently.



Listening

Tick the THREE ideas which you like the most.

1. Podcasts for ESOL students

Download a podcasts app, e.g. Apple podcasts, Spotify, Pocket Casts, Podbean. Many podcasts are also uploaded to You Tube. Search for podcasts for English students. Here are some to try:

- BBC 6-minute English
- British Council learn English
- Intermediate English
- English for Curious minds
- The to fluency podcast
- Easy English
- Level up English podcast
- Thinking in English
- Luke's English Podcast
- English and beyond

2. Watch TV and movies without subtitles

3. Websites and You Tube videos

Websites such as engvid.com provide plenty of listening practice. Also, search 'learn intermediate English' and you'll find loads of You Tube channels, e.g. English with Lucy, BBC Learning.

4. Podcasts for native speakers

This is more challenging but great to help you reach a higher level! Try BBC Sounds, TED Talks or search for interesting topics for you (health, cooking, sport etc) on Spotify, Apple Podcasts etc.

5. Speak more in English

As well as speaking more, you will listen to people when they reply to you! The next page has ideas about this.

6. Listen to English around you!

Listen to people in the street, on the bus, in shops etc. What are they saying? Pay attention and ask your teacher if you're unsure.

7. Music

Listen to songs and learn vocabulary by searching online for the lyrics or even use You Tube to listen and sing along! Go to **www.lyricstraining.com** for a website where you can listen and fill in the gaps.



Speaking

Tick the THREE ideas which you like the most.

1. Join a club

Search online for a club for you, e.g. a football club. You can search on Meetup.com for various groups in your area, e.g. sports clubs, reading groups, even groups which practise speaking different languages!

2. Get a paid-job/ voluntary job

This is a great way to improve your communication skills while also gaining work experience!

3. Language Exchanges

You need to find someone who speaks English fluently AND is interested in learning your language. You chat in your language and then change and chat in English! There are websites/ apps for this, e.g. Tandem, Hello Talk, Meetup.

4. Speak to a robot

There are various apps/ websites for this, e.g. Copilot, Google Gemini. You can even ask the AI to correct your English!

5. Private tutors

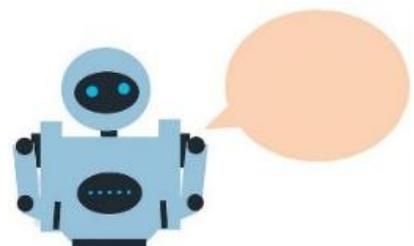
You can find tutors online, e.g. through sites such Italki and Preply, but obviously it's not free.

6. Chat with friends

If you make friends with English-speakers, e.g. at college, then why not meet for a coffee and practise your English?

7. Speak to yourself

Maybe you think this is crazy but perhaps speaking to a robot is even stranger!



Reading

Tick the THREE ideas which you like the most.

- 1. Borrow 'graded readers' from the library (stories for ESOL students for all levels).
- 2. Read books for native speakers.
- 3. Read magazines and newspapers.
- 4. The websites Breaking News English, *BBC Learning English* and *News in Levels* provide news articles for ESOL students.
- 5. Download apps such as Readable, LingQ, Readlang, or Beelinguapp as they let you read with vocabulary and audio support.
- 6. Watch TV/movies with subtitles in English.



Grammar and Vocabulary

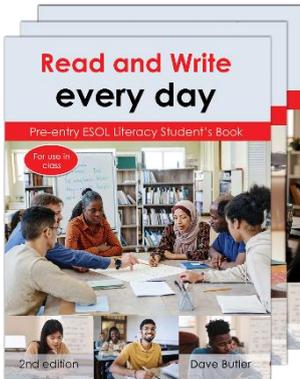
Tick the THREE ideas which you like the most.

- 1. Get grammar / vocabulary self-study books from the library / bookshops. There are loads to choose from but I recommend *Oxford Word Skills*, *English Vocabulary in Use* and *English Grammar in Use*.
- 2. Use websites / apps with self-study practise, e.g. English File, Headway etc. You can find loads of lessons on the BBC, e.g. Grammar with Georgie.
- 3. Make your own paper / digital flash cards, e.g. Quizlet, to revise vocabulary you have learned recently.
- 4. Speak and write outside class to practise using vocabulary / grammar you've learned. For example, write sentences about yourself using words you've learned in class. As they say, 'use it or lose it!'
- 5. Watch videos on You Tube to revise tricky grammar (e.g. search 'present perfect English lesson') or to learn/revise vocabulary.
- 6. Read the grammar section at the back of your coursebook.



ESOL BOOKS

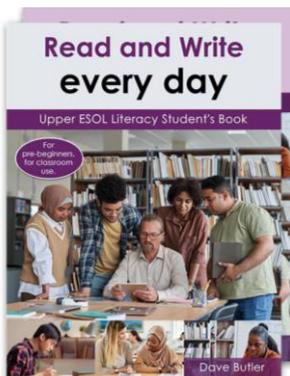
Current titles



Read and Write every day

ESOL Literacy Student's Book,
Workbook and Teacher's Book

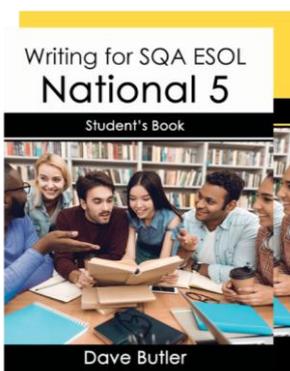
- ✓ For pre-entry level.
- ✓ 14 units based on contexts relevant to students' lives.
- ✓ Enables reading aloud, personalised writing, phonics and numeracy work.
- ✓ [Free sample units](#) available.



Read and Write every day

Upper ESOL Literacy Student's Book and Workbook

- ✓ For low beginners / Entry Level 1.
- ✓ Gives support with literacy / numeracy plus more advanced areas, e.g. grammar.
- ✓ Teacher's Book coming in December 2025.
- ✓ [Free sample units](#) available.



Writing for SQA ESOL National 5

Student's Book and Teacher's Book

- ✓ For upper intermediate / Level 1 learners (B2).
- ✓ Preparation for writing assessments.
- ✓ Focus on key task types: formal / informal e-mails, reports and essays.
- ✓ [Free sample units](#) available.