

**Defining needs, setting targets and looking at strategies**  
**Grammar**

You have decided to improve your grammar but you are not sure about which area to work on. Before you can set a target for your independent study plan you will need to take the following steps:

1. Think about why you want to improve your grammar
2. Work out more precisely where your main problems are in grammar
3. Find the most suitable techniques to improve your grammar.

**1. Why do you want to improve your grammar?**

*Think about the following reasons, tick the one(s) that most affect you and add your own if they do not match your situation.*

- I need to improve my grammar to be able to speak better.
- I need to improve my grammar in order to write better.
- I have to take a test before graduating and I need to improve my grammar accuracy.
- Add your own \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What are your problems in grammar?**

*a) Look at the problems described below. They are all problems related to grammar skills. Tick any problems you have.*

1. I don't know a wide enough range of structures.	2. I can't even use basic structures correctly.	3. I get bored so quickly doing grammar exercises.	4. I try to improve but never succeed.	5. I think I know the structure but I never use it correctly.
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*c) Are there any other factors which cause you problems with grammar?*

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**3. Techniques to use for your problems**

*a) Have a look at some suggested techniques and strategies – there could be many more. Mark the ones you think would be interesting and useful for you.*

Skills and techniques that will help you improve on the problems above.  
(on next page)

## HKBU Self-Study Skills

### 1. I don't know a wide enough range of structures.

- Look through the contents of a grammar book and mark the topics you don't know. Focus on these. Don't waste time on things you already know.
- Find new structures from reading or listening work. When you meet a new structure or pattern, write it down, then look out for it again as you continue reading / listening. Write down several examples until you feel you know how it is used.
- Try a range of input materials – don't use just one grammar book. Try software programmes, magazines and story books, etc.

### 2. I can't even use basic structures correctly.

- Take a test to find out your weakest areas.
- Plan your study so that you cover just one area at a time.
- Revise and test yourself until you have made progress before moving on to the next area.
- Use strategies from the other boxes – your problem may be related to one of the other areas.

### 3. I get bored so quickly doing grammar exercises.

- Use interactive materials, or materials that involve you using your grammar in context.
- Use authentic English materials (e.g. magazines, newspapers) and search for your grammar point. Why have they used that grammar point here? Try to use the grammar point in the same way.
- Get a better idea of your progress. Try to set targets which you can reach. When setting up your workplan, ask yourself 'How can I test that I have reached this target?'
- Make sure your study plan includes a regular revision phase. This will help your memory.
- Test your progress both before and after each grammar point you study. Use the same exercise twice if there is no test in the material you chose.
- Revise with a friend. Test each other on what you have learnt. It may be more motivating for you than doing it alone.
- Alternate grammar work with other language work.

### 4. I try to improve but never succeed.

- Try to target specific areas; don't do too much at once.
- Set more realistic targets so you can reach each one before you move on to the next.
- Try using different materials – if you always used books before, try using web-based materials or software programmes.
- Try different techniques – choose one topic (eg relative pronouns) and then look for examples of usage of this structure in reading material, instead of grammar books. Jot down all the samples of usage you find. Work out the rules for yourself, instead of reading the rule from a book.

### 5. I think I know the structure but I never use it correctly.

- You need to practise using what you have learnt – make sure the material you choose includes exercises where you have to use the language and not just recognise it in ready-made sentences.
- Try to find real opportunities to use the new structures you are studying – think of speaking and writing situations where you have a chance to use and test what you have learnt.
- Make a list of the structures you learn and tick them off when you use them in a real context (eg writing a course essay)
- Work with a friend. Choose a topic. Hold a conversation and try to use the structure(s) you're studying in the conversation. Award a point each time the other uses their target structure.

## HKBU Self-Study Skills

### 4. Summarising your needs

Write a short statement summarizing your **purpose** and **problems** in improving your grammar.

### 5. Writing a Target

Now write a target for your grammar study plan. Remember that your target should be measurable and achievable, appropriate for your needs, and include a time-frame.