

## Message from the Editor

Welcome to the November edition of the myClass newsletter. In this edition you will find out about the new **myClass Extended Assessment** which we will be offering as part of your myClass package from November. Read on to see what the **English Master** said in reply to the questions you submitted, and find some useful tips on how you can make the most of myClass by **setting yourself goals**. Meet some other members of the myClass team: **Chris Morgan**, myClass Coordinator and **Joanna Yu**, our Student Advisor, and get to know a bit more about your myClass teacher **Dan Staskiewicz**. Finally, take part in the November competition and **share a study tip** with your classmates.

We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter.

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## myClass updates

### Extended Assessment

In order to help you maximise the progress you are making while studying with myClass, we are pleased to introduce our new Extended Assessment. Starting on November 7<sup>th</sup>, following your 10<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> lessons, you will receive a detailed written report pinpointing the areas you have strengths in, as well as those that you need to work on.

#### **Which areas will I be assessed in?**

You will be assessed in the same areas as with your regular assessment, i.e. Task Achievement, Pronunciation, Fluency, Range and Appropriacy, and Accuracy.

#### **Will I still be given scores?**

Yes, the grading system remains the same. You will receive grades of Excellent, Good, Fair, or Room to Improve in each of the areas.

#### **How do I benefit?**

The Extended Assessment will provide you with clear examples of what you are doing well, and where you need to improve, based on the lesson assessment. This will help you better target your studies, and help you in choosing lessons that best meet your needs.

#### **When will I receive the Extended Assessment report?**

You will be able to access your report on your Student Portal within 24 hours of the lesson in which you were assessed.

#### **What can I do to find out more about my progress?**

You are welcome to contact the Student Advisor team before or after an Extended Assessment, or at any point you feel you need help, support or advice connected to your studies with myClass.

### Teacher Rotation

You may have noticed changes of teachers in some of the myClass lessons in the November schedule on the myClass student portal. Starting this month, we will be rotating teachers on some myClass time slots. The change will take place every six weeks.

## Why are the teachers being rotated?

It's easy to get stuck in your ways, and once we become used to a set way of doing things, we stop challenging ourselves, and, as a result, we stop making progress. In order to help you make the most of your myClass experience, we'd like you to have the opportunity to experience different teaching styles, and the range of approaches to teaching and learning that our teachers offer.

The rotation of teachers will allow you to experience a broader range of varieties of English, and new ways of considering language and communication. It will give you more chances to meet your favourite teachers at your preferred timeslots across a semester, and will allow you the opportunity to meet new teachers and find new favourites.

We hope you will embrace this opportunity to explore new insights into your English learning, and enjoy working with a range of new people supporting your development with English.

## myClass Academic Skills and Culture lessons

Just a reminder that we now offer new Academic Skills and Culture lessons. These lessons follow a familiar myClass lesson pattern but they focus specifically on developing language skills, especially in the area of reading. They are highly recommended if you're thinking of studying in or visiting the UK, or want to be able to tackle lengthier, more academic texts in different areas.

## New myClub sessions

Due to popular demand, we're happy to offer four extra myClub sessions a week. Check your myClass portal and register for sessions which interest you. Learn more with myClub.

## Request a myClub

myClub is an extra-curricular programme designed to help you make the most of your myClass experience. We do our best to provide sessions that best suit your needs. That's why starting this month, we'd like to invite you to **propose ideas for myClub sessions**. This could be a grammar point or an aspect of English pronunciation you're finding challenging. It could also be a topic you'd like to discuss, connected to a hobby you have or something you've been reading about in the media.

Simply send your request to: [myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk) and we will do our best to open a myClub session tailored to your request.

## Ask the English Master

The English Master is back and here to answer your questions. If you have a question for the English Master, send it to:

[myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk)

This month the English Master answers two of your questions.

Dear English Master,

Which of these sentences is correct?

1. My favourite fruit is apple.
2. My favourite fruit is apples.
3. My favourite fruit is an apple.

**This question has been in my head for years and different people have different answers!**

Thanks for this question – it certainly has got my **head in a spin\***!

Sentence 1 looks quite unusual without an article or a plural noun. We could change this sentence to *'My favourite fruit is the apple.'* In this example, we can imagine we are being presented with a choice of different fruits in front of us and we are asked to pick our favourite. Though grammatically correct, this would be a very strange context...

Sentence 2 is fine grammatically. In this sentence, the verb 'is' agrees with the subject 'my favourite fruit' – here, 'fruit' is singular. The verb, however, does not agree with the complement 'apples.' If you want to use 'are' in this sentence, you could change the subject to a plural to make the sentence *'My favourite fruits **are** apples, bananas and strawberries.'* Remember that fruit can act as both a countable and uncountable noun. In real-life, however, it still sounds a little odd...

Sentence 3, as with example 1, works better with the article 'the'.



Simon Lawfull, Senior Teacher Adults  
a.k.a. The English Master

Grammar aside, I would say that actually *none* of the above sentences are correct! We need to think about what we would say in a real-life situation. Native or proficient English speakers are unlikely to use any of them. Instead, we could say:

1. I **like** apples!
2. I **really love** apples!
3. Apples **are** my favourite fruit.

Did you know that I **absolutely love\*** strawberries, but I **can't stand\*** durian?

For more information on this question, check this great post on **onestopEnglish**:  
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/ask-the-experts/vocabulary-questions/vocabulary-concord-my-favourite-fruit-is/-are/146417.article>

**\*to get your head in a spin** – to become confused

**\*absolutely love** – to really like someone or something

**\*can't stand** – to really dislike something or someone

**Dear English Master,**

Recently, I've learned two idioms – '*to pull a fast one*' and '*to take someone for a ride.*' They really confuse me in their similar meaning. Could you tell me how they are different?

A fantastic question, and a great pair of idioms!

Both idioms have a similar meaning – to deceive or play a trick on someone. Look at the examples below:

1. 'The taxi driver tried to **pull a fast one** by taking the long route and asking me to pay an extra \$100!'

In this sentence, the taxi driver deceived me by taking a longer route and charging me more for the journey. He thought I wouldn't notice, but I did!

2. 'I think I'm being **taken for a ride** by my boss. She always asks me to do overtime, but never pays me for it.'

In this sentence, my boss has been taking advantage of me over a long period. She thinks I won't ask to get paid for my overtime, so therefore has not paid me.

The idioms are very similar, but with a couple of small differences:

1. '*To pull a fast one*' suggests a one-off action, whereas '*to take someone for a ride*' suggests something that has taken place over a longer period.

2. '*To take someone for a ride*' suggests there is a closer relationship between two people (e.g. boss and employee), whereas '*to pull a fast one*' suggests more of a distance (e.g. taxi driver and customer).

Want to learn more idioms? Take a look at the **The English We Speak** on the BBC Learning English website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/the-english-we-speak>

## Make the most of myClass

### *Setting yourself goals to make progress*

Let's face it, learning a foreign language isn't easy. It's a long process and despite all the hard work, it may sometimes feel like you're not really making much progress. Going through a plateau (or a period of stagnation) is a well-known phenomenon in language learning. Think back to when you first started studying English - it probably felt as though you learned a lot that first year or two. That's because it's easiest to see progress when one's just starting out. Going from zero to being able to communicate in most everyday situations makes a big difference. However, as myClass students, you've long passed that point - your knowledge of English extends far beyond the basic "survival" English and that's why it may be more difficult to see if you're making progress.

As with anything in life though, what's important is staying the course - and I don't mean just continuing your myClass course, although that's really important. If you didn't know the expression, 'to stay the course' means to keep going/persevere.

To be able to see progress, you may want to **set yourself goals**, namely two types of goals:

- study goals
- real-life challenges

### Study goals - set up a routine

#### **Regular study schedule - myClass + myClub**

Continuity is key to achieving success and to get best results, you should plan to take two myClass lessons a week and, ideally, one or two myClubs. We all lead busy lives so it's best to plan ahead. Look at your schedule and sign up for classes that you're able to attend ahead of time. If you know you'll be travelling, set aside extra time for self-study.

#### **Regular revision**

Studies show that in order to retain information, we need to revise. A simple rule is: 24 hours after the lesson, a week later, and a month later (the more, the better, of course). To do this, make it a point to go through your myClass and myClub notes and handouts the day after the

lesson. Come early to your next myClass lesson and spend 15 minutes revising what you studied last time.

## Regular self-study time

Set aside some self-study time each week to supplement your course. Visit some websites, for example <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en> or <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/> and brush up on your grammar, practise your pronunciation, or have some fun listening to podcasts or watching videos. There are many apps available on these websites which you can download to your phone. Thinking of taking a test of English? Try some sample tests at <https://www.ielts.org/about-the-test/sample-test-questions>.

## Identifying areas to work on from your myClass assessment

Ask your teacher for feedback before or after an assessment. Don't get discouraged if you get a "fair" or a "room to improve" - these are just indicators of what to focus on during your self-study time and in class. From November onwards, myClass will also offer **extended assessments** (see [myClass updates](#)). This is an excellent time to reflect on your study skills and progress.

If you came across something that's very hard to understand, maybe a difficult grammar point, or some words that are especially hard to pronounce, please share it with the myClub teachers at [myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk) - we can make a myClub session out of it. You can also send a question to the English Master at [myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk)

## Recognise your achievements

Find something you wrote in English a year or so ago - can you find any mistakes? That's an indication of having made progress. Look through some books you studied from in the past - do the questions seem easy? That's another great sign. If you have good study habits, you are definitely making progress. You've probably just become more aware of the complexity of the language. As Einstein said: 'The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know.'

## Real-life challenges

If you really want to master a language, you need to immerse yourself in it. Set your phone language to English - this will not only help you learn some new IT phrases in English, but will also remind you to use some of the apps you've downloaded for self-study. Watch films and series in English with English subtitles switched on. If you find this overwhelming at first, start

by watching those films you've already seen in your language - watching them for the second time in English will make it a lot easier. Pause the film when you hear a useful phrase and expression and note it down.

Do you work or study with foreigners? Don't be afraid to talk to them. If English is used in your office, take an active part in meetings. Use the skills you got in myClass in real life situations, for example, press '2' for English when requesting a service on the phone. Try [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) and go to events attended by foreigners. A good place to get some extra practice before venturing 'out there' is myClub - you can get extra practice and meet students you don't usually see in class in different myClub sessions.

What has helped you make progress? Share your study tip with other classmates by taking part in our [November competition](#).

### Check if you understood

1. Why is it usually easier to see progress in the first few years of studying a foreign language?
2. What's the recommended number of lessons you should take every week?
3. How long after the lesson should you revise the material for the first time?
4. In what way can getting a "fair" or a "room to improve" be helpful?
5. What could you do to check if you've made progress compared to a few years ago?
6. Name two things you can do outside the classroom to maximise your progress.

**Find the answers on the last page of the newsletter, or by clicking [here](#)**

## Meet the myClass Team

In each edition of the newsletter, we'll present profiles of different myClass team members.



### **This month, meet Chris Morgan, myClass Coordinator**

Chris Morgan is our myClass Coordinator.

Chris is focused on making sure myClass works for all our students. He recently created a new myClass induction for students and a screencast to guide students through using the OBS (Online Booking System). He also creates numerous surveys to interact with students and better understand what they want from myClass, putting this into practice in the way we timetable and deliver classes to students whenever possible. Chris especially enjoys teacher training and finding ways to bring creative ideas into myClass.

Chris is originally from Wales in the UK, and has been an English language teacher for 8 years. He has lived and taught in the UK, Japan, South Korea, Italy, and Hong Kong. In his free time, he likes reading science-fiction, following politics, hiking, playing board games, and seeing different parts of Hong Kong.

Chris is always happy to hear any feedback you have on myClass. You can reach him at [myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk) indicating: for the attention of Chris Morgan.



# Newsletter

## Meet the Student Advisor

**Joanna YU**

### English Services Advisor

#### Sales and Customer Management (SCM)

Joanna works at the British Council as the Student Advisor providing support to myClass students. If you attended a fun-filled myClass induction session, you may have already met her. Apart from leading the induction, Joanna keeps track of the students' learning progress on a regular basis. This means you may be hearing from her when you have completed an assessment, it looks like you're struggling to make progress, or are ready to move up a level.

Joanna says "I attended a regional meeting in July, and got to meet with Advisors from different countries. We analysed the challenges shared by Asian students, and formulated study plans to meet their needs. If you would like to know our study tips, don't hesitate to contact me or the other members of my team. Learning English is a long journey, so please let us travel with you."

You can reach Joanna by calling the Customer Service Hotline at +852 2913 5100 or by sending an email to [enquiries@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:enquiries@britishcouncil.org.hk)

## myTeachers

In each edition of the newsletter, we present a different myClass teacher. This is your chance to get to know more about your favourite teachers. Send your questions to a favourite teacher to [myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk)

This month, Dan Staskiewicz answers your questions



*What is life like for you in Hong Kong?*

After living in Hong Kong for a year I can honestly say that it has been quite an adventure. It has given me more opportunities to explore the outdoors and to try to learn more about a different culture which are two things I really appreciate. I used to live in Russia before coming to Hong Kong so the weather has been quite a change too! I've really enjoyed my life in Hong Kong so far and I'm really looking forward to exploring more and being more adventurous during my time here.

*What is your favourite part of the lessons you teach?*

One of the best feelings I get at work is that moment when I can see that an entire group of students has learned something new or interesting. I like to call these moments "aha! moments". It's very rewarding to explain something like grammar or pronunciation or even the meaning of a word and see the look on everyone's faces that says, "Oh! Now I understand!". It makes me feel very good about what I do every day.

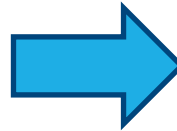
*Why did you become a teacher?*

It's a pretty typical answer but it's because my mom is also a teacher. She inspired me to go into teaching because she would always come home with stories about her days at school. I could always see how passionate she was about her job. I also feel great when I'm able to help someone or teach someone something new. So it's no wonder that this is my job! I really love my job and would not change it for anything else.

*I would like to improve my English grammar. What's the best way for me to do it?*

If it's grammar that you are trying to improve on I would suggest self-study books that come with answer keys. They always help to check your progress and they come with rules that are easy to read and understand. Try and find some time every few days or once a week to sit down and do some exercises from a book or online. Even a half hour can go a long way. Also, don't forget about the myClass extra activities online and the LearnEnglish app to give you even more practice.

Next time, we feature Darshika Saxena  
**Got a question for Darshika?**  
Send it to [myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk)



## September competition – the winning entry

The winner of the September competition is MA Oi Ka. Congratulations!

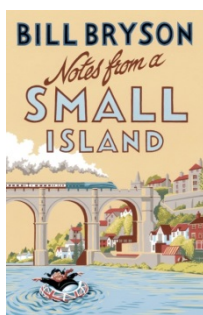
MA Oi Ka writes about being especially fond of the British accent, finds comparisons between English and other languages and identifies what's sometimes challenging for learners of English.

Please read her entry below.

### What do you like about British culture?

*The thing I like most about British culture is the language - British English. I like the pronunciation, the sound, the rhythm, intonation and so on. British English is a mixture of languages. It is really interesting that the English that British people speak nowadays is mixed with French, Latin, Germanic languages and other languages. That means when we are learning these languages, we are also learning English. For instance, the words of "encore" and "entrepreneur" came from French, "hamster" and "kindergarten" came from German. Although learning English is a lot of fun, it can also be tricky. The pronunciation of words in English is quite often confusing for the non-native speakers. For example, the pronunciation of the words "flour" and "flower" are the same but have different spelling. The sound of the words like ice and eyes are quite similar. It is hard to distinguish these two sounds. Also, the pronunciation of some letters is not always intuitive. For example, the "gh" sound in the words laugh is pronounced as an "f" sound. Moreover, keeping the same words in a sentence that can be change their meaning just by different stress position, such as, "I'm going home. If the word "home" is stressed, this means focus on the place "home", not other places. In addition, English words and phrases are full of rhythm. I can feel the music and rhythm in the word of "earnest". Learning English can be amusing. If you find your magic key, you can be a successful learner. That is why I enjoy learning the English language so much.*

We will contact the winner to collect her prize – “Notes from a Small Island” by Bill Bryson.



## November competition

We've been talking a lot about making progress in English in this issue of the newsletter. Don't forget to test out some study tips from the ['Make the most of myClass' section](#) and chat to your teachers about your regular and extended assessments.

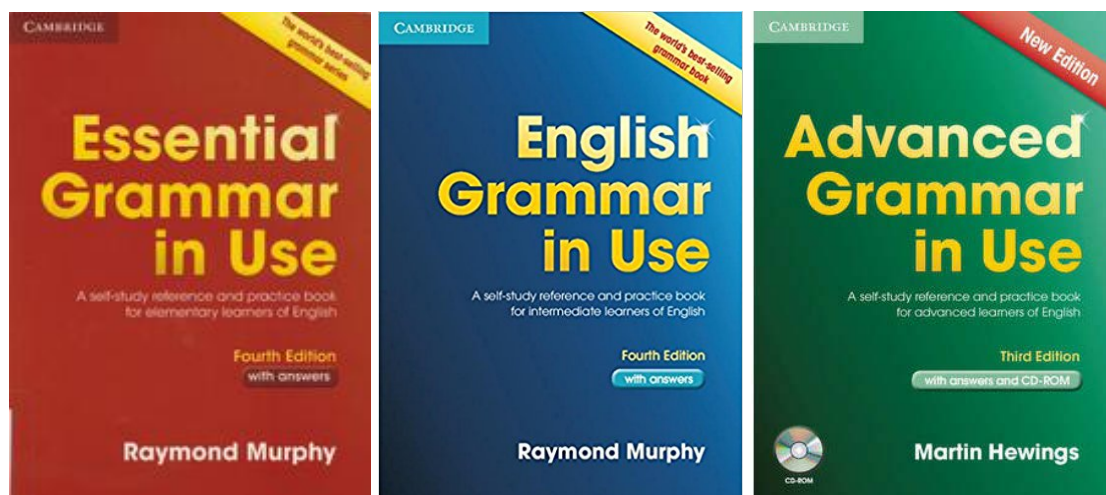
In this edition of the newsletter, we're asking you

**What has helped you make progress in English?**

**Share a study tip you have with your classmates.**

Submit your entry by filling out [the form attached](#) and send it to [myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk) by 1 December 2017.

You can win one of the following books, depending on your level:



Grammar in Use is an excellent resource for self-study which could help you make progress.



# Newsletter

## Share your myClass experience with us

We do our best to meet our students' needs. In order to do so, we welcome feedback from our students. To do so, you are welcome to contact our Customer Service Hotline at +852 2913 5100.

If you wish to share your comments with the myClass team and other students, you may also contact the Editor at [myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk). Your comments may be published in the next edition of the newsletter.

- **How is myClass working for you?**
- **Do you feel you are making progress?**
- **Which lessons did you find useful?**
- **Do you go to myClub?**
- **What can we do to make your myClass experience better?**

## myClub Corner

### myClub visits the Asia Society

In October, myClub visited the Asia Society where we got a guided tour of the exhibition “Painting Her Way” – the Ink Art of Fang Zhaoling. Here is a picture from our visit. You may see the exhibition until the end of December. For more information, go to:

<http://asiasociety.org/hong-kong/exhibitions/hong-kong-jockey-club-presents-%E2%80%94-painting-her-way-ink-art-fang-zhaoling>



### Request a myClub

Are you struggling with a certain aspect of grammar? Maybe there are some words that are hard to pronounce or sounds that you'd like to practise? Would you like to discuss a certain subject matter - something in the news, an activity, or a famous person?

Send your request to: [myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk)



# Newsletter

## Over to you

Don't forget you can reach the editor and the myClass team by writing to [myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClass@britishcouncil.org.hk)

Please also remember you can:

- **Ask the English Master any question you may have about the English language**
- **Find out about a myClass teacher (Darshika Saxena) – send in your questions**
- **Take part in our November Competition – What has helped you make progress in English? – share your study tip**
- **Request a myClub by sending an email to: [myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:myClub@britishcouncil.org.hk)**
- **Share your myClass experience with us**

## Answers to 'Check if you understood'

1. Why is it usually easier to see progress in the first few years of studying a foreign language?

Progress is usually easiest to see when we're just starting out because **we compare our achievements with "zero"**. Think about starting an exercise regimen: the classic "couch to 5K" challenge really makes you feel like you've turned your life around, whereas improving your PB (personal best) in a marathon from 4hours, 20 minutes to 4hours, 15 minutes doesn't. In the greater scheme of things however, somebody who runs marathons is definitely more fit than someone who just started running.

2. What's the recommended number of lessons you should take every week?

You should aim to take **two myClass lessons** and **one or two myClubs a week**. Luckily myClass gives you the flexibility to decide on the frequency of your sessions depending on your own schedule. If you have a busy week and can't come to myClass, you should allocate more self-study time to compensate.

3. How long after the lesson, should you revise the material for the first time?

It's best to make it a point to revisit the material **the next day**. You should then go back to it after a week, then a month. The more, the better, of course!

4. In what way can getting a "fair" or a "room to improve" can be helpful?

It can help you **identify areas to focus on** while studying on your own and in myClass. You can also choose which myClass lessons to go to based on the areas you need to improve.

5. What could you do to check if you've made progress compared to a few years ago?

Have a look at some old books you studied from, or find an old piece of writing you've done in class.

6. Name two things you can do outside the classroom to maximise your progress.

Any two of the following:

Set your phone to English, watch films in English, talk to people who don't speak the same language as you, take part in meetings in English, choose English when speaking to service providers on the phone, join activities organised in English and go to myClub.