

## **Speak here, write now**

Developing productive skills in the classroom

Edmund Dudley

Prague 11th April 2019

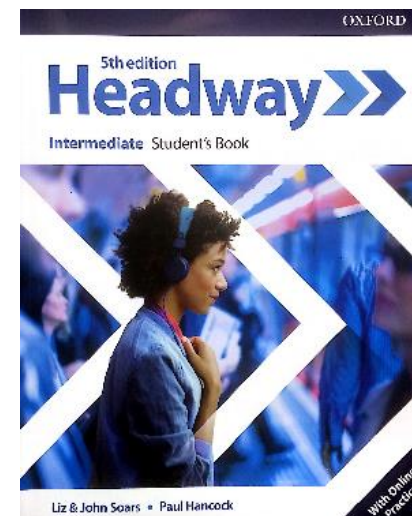
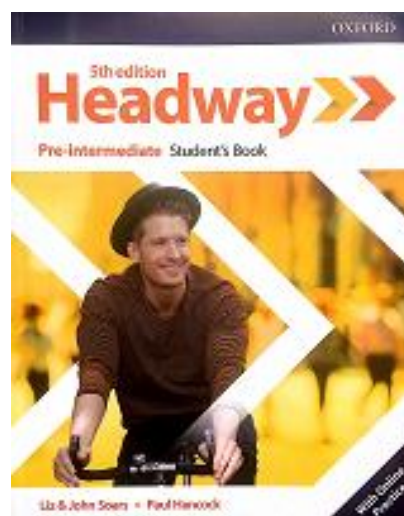
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## In this talk

Speak here, write now

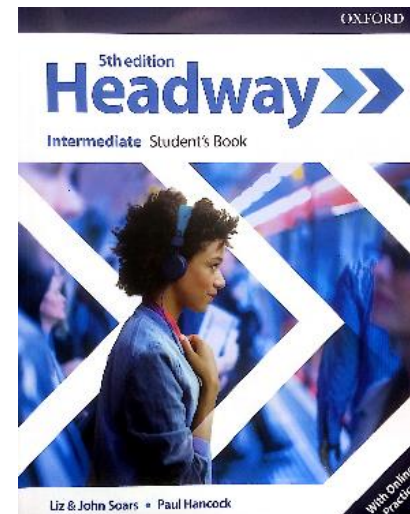
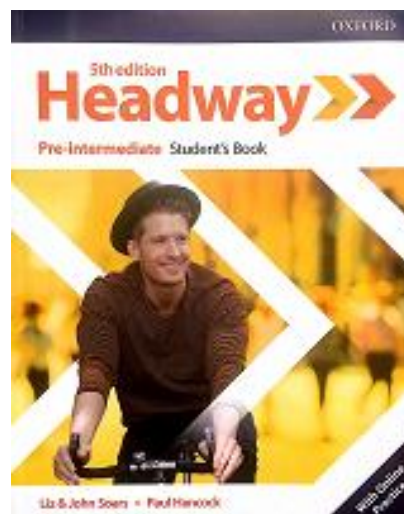
- focus on speaking skills
- focus on writing skills



# In this talk

Speak here, write now

- **focus on speaking skills**
- focus on writing skills



# Focus on speaking skills

## Seven ideas to try

1. Opening phrases
2. Describing your own pictures
3. Roleplays in L1
4. Try it again
5. My G.A.S
6. Paired monologues
7. No need to speak

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## Opening phrases

The issue: Students are nervous and self-conscious

### What do you think?

- Which of the friendships do you think will be lifelong? Why?
- What do you think makes a best friend? Is it important to have one?
- Who was your first best friend? Where and when did you meet them?
- Do you have many friends on social media? Can these be best friends?

Students often do not know how to begin

They get more and more nervous

When they do begin speaking, the outcome is often poor



# Opening phrases

The solution: Practise bright starts and strong finishes

Teach generic introductory phrases:

*That's an interesting question, let me think about that for a minute...*

*When I think about this topic the first thing that springs to mind is...*

Teach assertive concluding phrases:

*And that's all I have to say about this particular topic.*

*I think that more or less covers it!*

## What do you think?

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# Describing your own pictures

The issue: Students tire of the pictures we give them



→ How can we make picture description tasks more engaging?

# Describing your own pictures

The solution: Get them to work with their own pictures

Activities to try:

- pose like the people in the book
- differences and similarities
- stories from pictures

Tip: Try this towards the end of a lesson



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## Roleplays in L1

The issue: students lack ideas and experience

In real life, how many of your students have used English to...

...ask about commission on an exchange?

...enquire about the price of a silk designer dress?

...inform a 'forgetful' assistant that they have not received the right amount of change?

...pay by card in a restaurant?





# Roleplays in L1

The solution: practise roleplays in L1 first

The benefits:

- reveals language gaps
- reveals life experience gaps
- reveals social-skills gaps
- allows specific lexical needs to emerge
- great opportunity to notice and remember

Who do you work for?

Siemens. I've been with them for four years. They're a good company. How about you?

## Roleplay

You are abroad on a business trip. Invent a name and a background for yourself. You are at a social event. Stand up and socialize! Ask and answer questions.



Go online for more speaking practice

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## Try it again

The issue: students mess up and feel bad afterwards

### What do you think?

- Why don't we learn from the mistakes of history?
- What could we do to help us stop repeating history's problems?
- What periods of history would you *like* to see repeated?

What are the reasons for poor speaking performance?

What is the most helpful thing a teacher can do after a poor speaking effort?



## Try it again

The solution: invite students to try again

### What do you think?

- Why don't we learn from the mistakes of history?
- What could we do to help us stop repeating history's problems?
- What periods of history would you *like* to see repeated?

Resist the temptation to offer correction

Instead, ask them if they'd like to try again

The second attempt is usually significantly better

→ less nervous, more focused

→ more language and ideas in place

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## My G.A.S

The issue: students don't know what to say

### What do you think?

- Why are people interested in their family history?
- How far back can you go in your family history?
- Would you like to know more? Why/Why not?
- How could you find out more?

- Students' lack of confidence often results in basic efforts
- Sometimes – genuinely – they have no idea what to say



# My G.A.S

The solution: talk about your grandmother

Begin your answer with: **My grandmother always says...**

## What do you think?

- Why are people interested in their family history?
- How far back can you go in your family history?
- Would you like to know more? Why/Why not?
- How could you find out more?

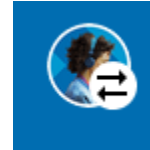
- provides a solid, personal context
- makes answers more complex and interesting
- frees the imagination and generates further ideas
- makes every answer sound wise



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# Paired monologues

The issue: students are reluctant to polish their answers

## 1. Talk about your language learning.

- Which languages can you speak? Which are your favourite languages and why?
- What is your experience of learning English? (when/where/why/how long)
- How has learning English made your life better? (study/work/people/travel/free time)
- What are you going to use your English for in the future?

# Paired monologues

The solution: get students to record each other

→ Students record each other using their phones

The benefits:

- students - for some reason - enjoy it
- they want to do multiple takes
- allows buddy feedback from partner



## Online Practice

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## No need to speak

The issue: sometimes they don't want to speak

### What do you think?

Discuss in small groups.

- How many *real* friends can a person have? Is it OK for someone to have just one or two friends?
- Do social media sites make people feel they need more friends? How and why?

After paired tasks:

- Do you ask students to share their thoughts with the class?
- Do your students ever resist?
- Yeah, so do mine. Why do you think that is?
- What do you usually do?



## No need to speak

The solution: let them speak, pass, or nominate

After pair work, give students the option of *not* speaking; instead, they can choose to ***pass*** or ***nominate*** their partner

- builds trust
- is face-saving
- increases confidence
- works well try it and see for yourself

### What do you think?

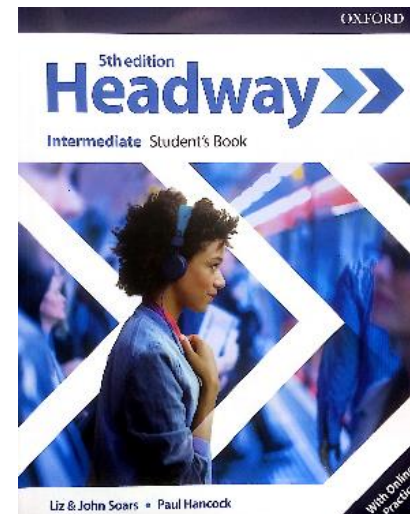
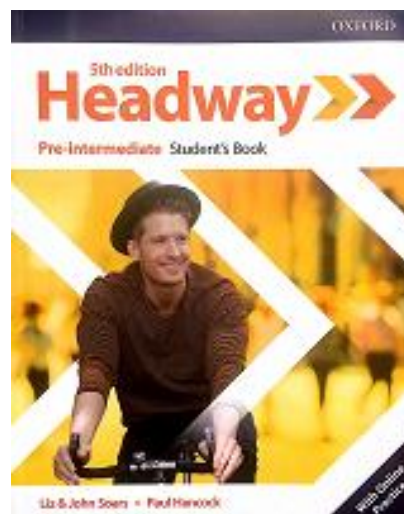
Discuss in small groups.

- How many *real* friends can a person have? Is it OK for someone to have just one or two friends?
- Do social media sites make people feel they need more friends? How and why?

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- **focus on writing skills**



# Focus on writing skills

## Seven ideas to try

1. Unusual constraints
2. Random phrases
3. Time limits
4. Joint hardship
5. Plan it and stop
6. Left hand, right hand
7. Hidden lyrics

# Focus on writing skills

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## Unusual constraints

The issue: students can't get interested in the task

4 Think of a holiday place you visited where they had beautiful postcards. Write a postcard from there to your English class.



## Unusual constraints

The solution: add an 'unusual constraint' as an option

4 Think of a holiday place you visited where they had beautiful postcards. Write a postcard from there to your English class.

Add additional constraints and arbitrary requirements, e.g.:

- no words containing the letter **Y**
- use six different colour words

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## Random phrases

The issue: stronger students are not always challenged

- 5** Imagine you are applying for the job of activity leader. Write an email using some of the formal phrases from 1.

### B Formal

- a Since leaving university ...
- b I'd be very grateful if you could ...
- c Contact me by phone or email as soon as possible.
- d I'd like to assure you ...
- e During my employment at/in ...
- f I regret to inform you that ...

## Random phrases

The solution: provide an optional challenge

- come up with an unusual phrase
- challenge students to use it – as naturally as possible
- the challenge is optional

**5** Imagine you are applying for the job of activity leader. Write an email using some of the formal phrases from 1.

For an extra challenge, use the phrase:  
since getting out of prison

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## Time limits

The issue: students work at different speeds

**6** Write a formal email about yourself to the school in York. Then write to an English friend about your plan.

- we often set word limits for written tasks
- this is not as fair as we think it is
- writing x words is easy for some students, difficult for others



## Time limits

The solution: use time limits instead

**6** Write a formal email about yourself to the school in York. Then write to an English friend about your plan.

- works well with flexible, open-ended writing tasks
- effective in mixed-ability groups
- students agree on a time and set the timer

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## Joint hardship

The issue: low-quality homework assignments

**5** Write about a friend or family member.

The writing tasks we set for homework are often:

- not handed in
- poorly written
- copied or second-hand
- done at the last-minute
- or done in 'solitary confinement'



## Joint hardship

The solution: do it in class

- 4 With your partner, read and correct the piece of student writing **My best man and best friend**.
- 5 Write about a friend or family member.
- 6 Swap with a partner and see if you can find any mistakes. Read some examples of your work aloud to the class.

Do writing tasks in class, not for homework

- students can foster a sense of *joint hardship* (Dörnyei)
- they work together on things that need practice
- *pain is inevitable; suffering is optional*

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## Plan it and stop

The issue: students rarely take the time to plan

**5** Write a similar description (about 200 words) of your hometown. First write some notes about it:

- Where is it?
- What's it like now?
- What's the population?
- What do you like about it?
- What's its history?
- What don't you like?

Why are students so reluctant to plan their writing?

- planning uses up more time
- the sooner they start, the sooner they finish
- their most important goal is to *be finished*



## Plan it and stop

The solution: don't do the writing, only the plan

**5** Write a similar description (about 200 words) of your hometown. First write some notes about it:

- Where is it?
- What's the population?
- What's its history?
- What's it like now?
- What do you like about it?
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An occasional alternative:

- students write the plan in full
- they hand in the plan
- they do **not** do the writing task itself
- grade the plan

# Focus on writing skills

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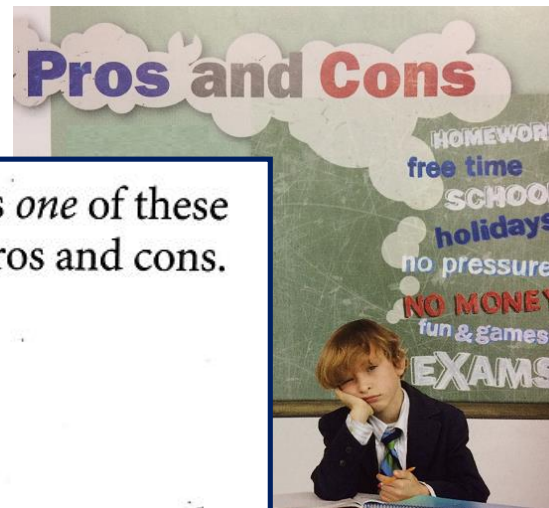
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## Left hand, right hand

The issue: students can't get started

It can be hard to get going, especially if the task requires the students to consider different perspectives.



- 5 Work with a partner and discuss *one* of these subjects and make a list of the pros and cons.
  - 1 Boarding school.
  - 2 Getting older.
  - 3 Having children when young.
- 6 Use your ideas from 5 to write four paragraphs on your chosen subject. You can use the phrases from 2 to help you. Read your essay aloud to the class. Do they agree with your conclusions?

## Left hand, right hand

The solution: put the pen in the other hand!

- write two sentences: one left-handed, one right-handed
- each hand represents a different side of the question
- imagine a conversation between your left hand and right hand
- switch the pen from hand to hand for each new turn

Hi, my name is left

Hi, my name is Right

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# Hidden lyrics

The issue: students rarely read each other's work

Why it would be good if students read each other's work:

- greater motivation to write well
- chance to notice and learn
- chance for buddy feedback
- opportunities to communicate

→ What is usually lacking is a *reason to read*

**7** Write a folk tale or fairy story that you know. Write about 200 words.  
Begin: **There was once ...** or **Once upon a time, there ...**  
End: **... and they lived happily ever after.**

# Hidden lyrics

The solution: smuggle lyrics into a written text

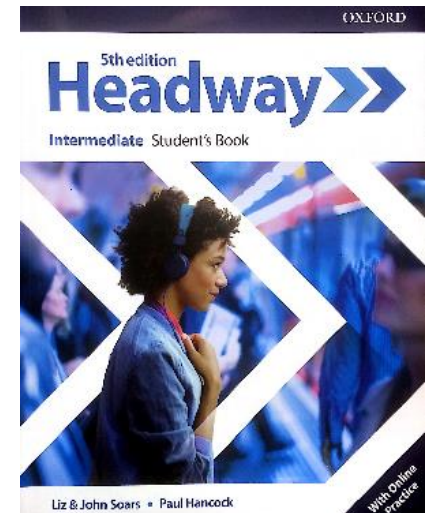
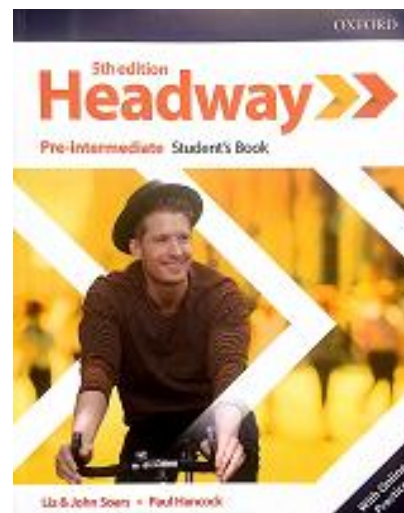
- students do the writing
- they also think of a song and find the lyrics
- they add at least three lyrics from the song to their text
- others have to read and try to recognise the song

**7** Write a folk tale or fairy story that you know. Write about 200 words.  
Begin: **There was once ...** or **Once upon a time, there ...**  
End: **... and they lived happily ever after.**

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Slides here:

[legyened.edublogs.org](https://legyened.edublogs.org)