

Path to Success: Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT)



Here are **6** things you can do in the days and hours before the OOPT to make sure your score is a fair reflection of your English level.

1. Revise **phrasal verbs** as native speakers use them all the time
2. Revise **idioms** as native speakers use them all the time
3. Learn more **collocations** as they are the key to fluent English
4. Improve your **listening skills** by listening to more English
5. Improve your **exam technique overall**
6. Improve your **exam technique** for the listening section

Read more below

1. Revise **phrasal verbs** as native speakers use them all the time

The OOPT specifically tests your knowledge of phrasal verbs as native speakers use them all the time, especially when speaking and in informal writing.

What is a phrasal verb?

The phrasal verbs have been marked **in bold** if you are not sure what they are.

“I’ll **put you up** next time if I can still **put up with you**,
but you’ll have to stop **putting me down** in front of my girlfriend.”

Did you understand what they all meant? If not, you will have to spend time learning them.

If you understood them all, then check the box at the end of the page. If you get those right, you can skip to the next point.

You need to start learning them actively so you can recognize and understand them.

Step 1: Watch

Go to YouTube, type in ‘phrasal verbs’. Watch any three videos a day every day between now and the test. Here’s an example:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7VKVxbaj_Y. **Now find some [more](#).**

Step 2: Test yourself

Go to the search engine of your choice, type in ‘phrasal verbs quiz’. Do a test a day every day between now and the test. Here’s an example:

<https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/phrasal-verbs-quiz.htm>. **Now find some more.**

Skip this if you know...

...whether the sentences below are right or wrong:

By the way, I **turned into** John in Dublin.

Right Wrong

I’ll **back you down** if she causes trouble.

Right Wrong

It’ll be easy if you have a boss that you **get across with**.

Right Wrong

Die Kirche
im Dorf
lassen?

2. Revise **idioms** as native speakers use them all the time

- The OOPT specifically tests your knowledge of idioms as native speakers use them all the time.
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- **Sample German idiom: *Die Kirche im Dorf lassen***
What does this idiom even mean? To leave the church in the village?

As a learner of German, it is impossible to understand its meaning just from the words themselves. The same is normally true of English idioms, too. The OOPT tests to see how well you know common English idioms.

Luckily, you don't need to use idioms actively to be good at English, but you do need to understand them when you read and hear them.

Step 1: Watch

Go to YouTube, type in 'idioms'. Watch any three videos a day every day between now and the test. Here's one example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJS77wXttpl>.

Now find some [more](#).

Step 2: Test yourself

Go to the search engine of your choice, type in 'idioms quiz'. Do a test a day every day between now and the test. Here's one example:

<https://www.englishclub.com/ref/Idioms/Quizzes/>. **Now find some more.**

Skip this...

...if you know what these sentences mean:

"She spilled the beans, so the ball is in her court."

"Mum's the word."

"I have a lot on my plate."

"I'm in two minds."

3. Learn more **collocations** as they are the key to fluent English



As a German speaker, you will automatically know what the last word is:

Sie haben schon eine Entscheidung [Click or tap here to enter text..](#)

This is because the German word 'Entscheidung' is often found in the same place, i.e., it co-locates with, the word 'machen' or 'treffen'. That is why such natural partnerships are called collocations.

Learning these natural partnerships is the key to successful communication in any language.

Step 1: Watch

Go to YouTube, type in 'collocations'. Watch any three videos a day every day between now and the test. Here's one example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqRloBkyqQs>. Now find some [more](#).

Step 2: Test yourself

Go to the search engine of your choice, type in 'collocations quiz'. Do a test a day every day between now and the test. Here's one example:

<https://www.espressoenglish.net/business-collocations-quiz/>. Now find some more.

Skip this step if you know if these sentences are right or wrong:

She ran a bath. Right Wrong

She ran a car. Right Wrong

She ran a risk. Right Wrong

She ran a story. Right Wrong

She had a runny nose. Right Wrong

I had a frank discussion with Frank. Right Wrong

4. Improve your **listening skills** by listening to more English



Listen to as much English as possible before the OOPT. You need to train your ear.

Why not download the [BBC Sounds app](#) and listen to some of these podcasts?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p002vsxs/episodes/downloads>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02tb8vq/episodes/downloads>

Or listen to some podcasts from Ireland

<https://www.irishtimes.com/podcasts/inside-business/>

<https://www.businesspost.ie/extra/podcast/>

Or listen to some American business podcasts like the ones below:

<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510289/planet-money>

<https://www.fool.com/podcasts/>

<https://hbr.org/podcasts>

<https://www.ted.com/podcasts/worklife>

5. Improve your exam technique overall

a. Top tip: Try to recognize the grammar or vocabulary area that is being tested

It may seem obvious but the designers of the OOPT want weak students to get the wrong answers. They design the test so that this happens. If you rely on a feeling or guesswork to pick the right answer you will by design pick the wrong one.

Top tip: Try to work out what type of answer they are looking for **before** you look at the choices.

Very often it is easy to recognize the type of grammar they are looking for:

Example 1:

Man: It's very hot in here.

Woman: Yes, it's boiling.

Man: Would you mind [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) the window?

After the expression "[would you mind](#)", you often have the gerund, or -ing form of the verb. So, the correct answer will probably end in -ing. In fact, you have probably already worked out that the missing word is 'opening'.

b. Top tip: Read the whole conversation

They want weak students to get the wrong answers. One way they do this is by making the words after the gap essential to getting the right answer. Weak students normally read to the gap, stop and pick an answer. This is not a good idea. Read the full sentence.

Concentrate on the words after the gap.

Example 2:

Man: Should we go for a walk [Wählen Sie ein Element aus.](#) the rain?

Woman: Why not? The forecast says it will stop soon.

Man: Let's go in an hour then.

In this case, it is crucial that you realize the importance of the word after the gap being a noun ('the rain'). Of the four choices only one:

- 1) ...is correct in its form. The expression is 'in spite of', not 'in spite', so 'in spite' is wrong.
- 2) ...fits the meaning. Only 'even though' and 'despite' could potentially fit the meaning of the sentence.
- 3) ...fits the grammar of being followed by a noun in this case. So, which is the correct answer? 'Even though' or 'despite'?

6. Improve your exam technique for the listening section

a. Listen for meaning, not words

They want weak students to get the wrong answers.

Weak students won't fully understand what the people are saying but they will probably recognize words they have read in the answer choices. The OOPT will exploit this fact. The wrong answers on the screen will use words that you can hear the people say.

That is why you have to listen to the meaning of what the people say and not individual words they use.

In the listening section, they are testing your understanding of **meaning**. They are **not** testing your ability to recognize words that you have just read on the screen. This means if you hear a word that you can also see in an answer, this answer is probably **wrong**. Probably. They want weak students to pick the wrong answers, and this is one way to do it. The word might be the same, but the meaning is almost always a different one.

Top tip: *As you read the answers, think of synonyms for the words you see on screen. These are the kind of words you will hear the speakers say.*

Let's imagine this was one of the answers:

A) *The venue proved more suitable than ones used previously.*

As you read, think of some possible alternatives for these words.

Venue = 'location', or something specific such as 'hotel' or 'conference hall'.

Proved = 'turned out to be'

Suitable = appropriate

Ones = location, or something specific such as 'hotel', 'site'.

Previously = 'in the past', or something specific such as 'last year'.

If you are lucky, you will hear some of these words in the recording, making it easier to pick the right answer.

b. Some of the answers are indirect, especially as the questions get harder

A man and a woman are shopping for a new kitchen

Man: What about this kitchen? It has everything we need.

Woman: Our curtains are green.

What is the woman trying to say? It's not so easy to tell.

Answer: She is rejecting this kitchen as a good choice because of the color. Obviously, the color of the kitchen does not match the green color of the curtains they already have.

As the questions get harder, many of the answers are like this.



Hopefully, the advice above will not only help you score well on the OOPT but also set you on your journey to professional success.

Answers

Skip this step if you know...

....whether the sentences below are right or wrong:

By the way, I ~~bumped~~**turned** into John in Dublin.

Right Wrong

I'll **back you up**~~down~~ if she causes trouble.

Right Wrong

It'll be easy if you have a boss that you **get** ~~across~~**along with**.

Right Wrong

Skip this step if you know if these sentences are right or wrong:

She ran a bath.

Right Wrong

She ran a car.

Right Wrong

She ran a risk.

Right Wrong

She ran a story.

Right Wrong

She had a runny nose.

Right Wrong

I had a frank discussion with Frank. Right Wrong