

Why Students *Fail = F*



An honest and insightful look into...

Why Students Fail English Language Exams.

(Or *any* exam for that matter)

By: Todd Pekel



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Dedication & Thanks !!

This book is dedicated to all of my
Proficiency students.

Thanks for giving me material and
allowing me to bounce my ideas off you!

You are all great!

I wish you continued success in ***everything*** you do.

Με αγάπη,
Todd



Preamble

You may be wondering (and perhaps rightly so) as to why an English teacher would write a book like this. After all, I've literally helped hundreds and hundreds of students **succeed**... not fail.

Students from all over the world have received internationally recognized English language certificates from various universities, private organizations and even governments having received my tutelage.

**Most students, like people in general,
don't like to talk about failure.**

We don't like to hear negative things. We like being told how good we are. We want to hear that we can pass exams and do so without much effort. The fact of the matter is, that it's good for someone to come along every once in a while and tell us the truth.



There's much to be gained from considering the subject of success and English language exams. You'll benefit from taking a closer look at the subject at hand.



Over the last few years, the number of people taking the various English Language exams that exist today, has increased tremendously. What's more, statistics have been gathered concerning these test takers and exam success rates. Depending on your age, your country, and the number of times you've taken the exam, chances are pretty good that the outcome of your test can be predicted.

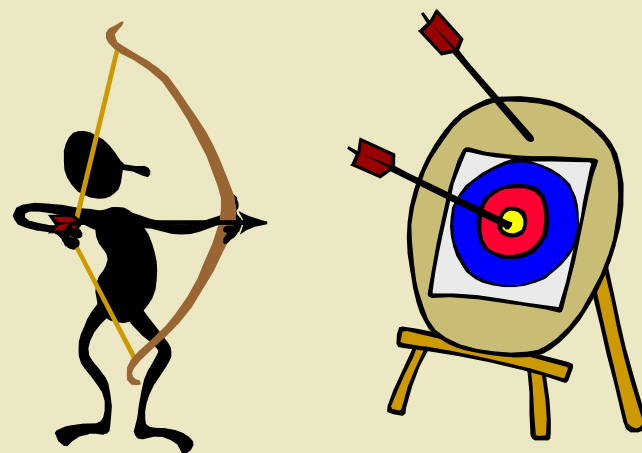
Granted, **there are always exceptions and surprises**, but for the most part the statistics have remained quite steady over the years.



Did you know that the overall pass rates for the two most popular English Proficiency exams is something like 35 % for first time test takers?

This low success score reflects **two** things basically.

1. **The tests are difficult.** The tests are designed so that a pass represents a level of English held by a native speaker with one year of university education.
2. Many students **underestimate the level** of English needed and **fail to prepare adequately and miss the target!**



I'm not giving you this information, to scare you, **but to challenge you**. I challenge you to work harder and smarter than you've ever worked in your life. I challenge you to **prove to yourself** that what I share in this book and what you'll find on our web site - is the most helpful, efficient and complete advice you've ever received from anyone, anywhere!

In other words...

we want you to...

pass your exams!!

With the above in mind we have developed our web site and produced this book.

On our site you'll find instructions for **each section** of your exam.

What's more, each section of the exam has practice material designed to help you **improve your score**.



The research and experience I've gained over the last 15 years preparing students for various English exams like the TOEFL, IELTS, CPE, ECPE, GMAT, and GRE has convinced me that...

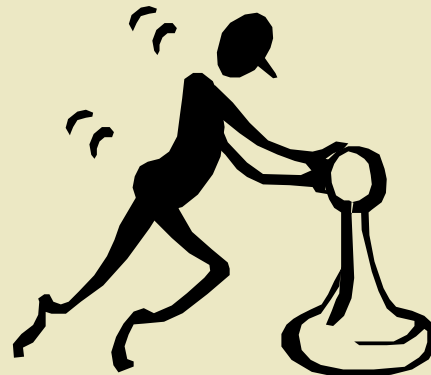
Anyone Can Pass Any Exam!

All you need to know is... **HOW?**

This is where I can help.

I will show you **HOW** to succeed on your English exam.

Whether you succeed or not,



is up to you...



Introduction

Before we get started I want to ask you something...

Don't worry; I'm NOT going to ask you for money : -)

I want to ask you for **two** small things.

- **First**, if you benefit from our site and this book, tell someone else.
- **Second**, if you **don't** benefit from our site and this book... please **tell me**.

Why?

So we can improve. Seriously. I want our site to be **THE PLACE** to get online help for your exam. We can only do that with your help.

Does that sound fair?

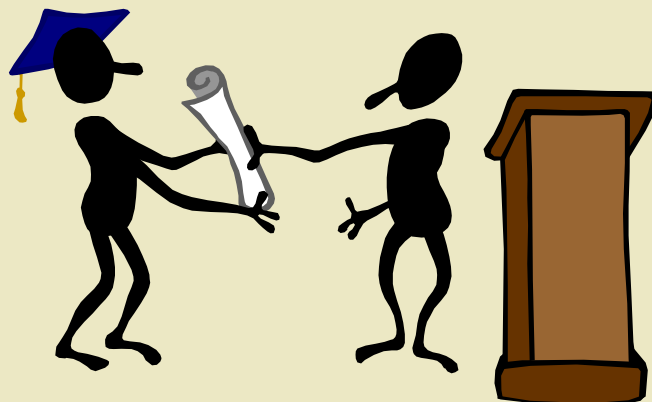
I think it does.

If you do too, then we're **ready to begin...**



I always tell my students that to succeed they have to **eliminate mistakes**. In fact, the elimination of mistakes is (to a degree) the very definition of success.

NO MISTAKES = SUCCESS



Apart from the statistics that I shared earlier, I believe a look at the different types of students and what it is that prevents them from succeeding will benefit you, the reader of this book.

The information that follows is the result of **more than 15 years** of classroom experience.

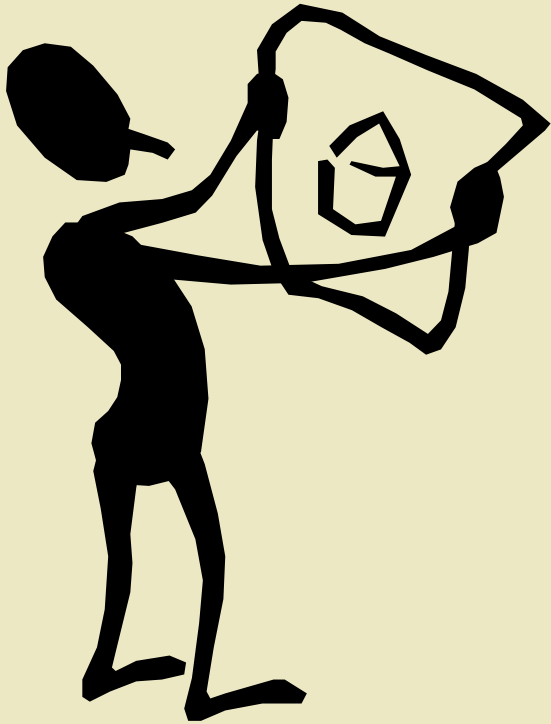


What follows is **NOT** intended to criticize or belittle.

In fact, the following was written to **inform** and to **promote** change.

It is my intention to help students go from test failure to...

test success.



If you are ready to take an honest and insightful look at

“Why Students Fail,”

then I promise to do my best
to help you achieve your goals.



1.) The Lazy Student



We all fall prey to it (*laziness, lack of motivation*) at times, but this student makes an art of it. You know the type. Never does homework or when they **do** do homework it's sloppy, without much time or thought having been spent on it.

Lazy students often just copy the example from the book.

They even write, “**I don’t know**” in their exercises so that they can *honestly* say...



Quote: "...But I **did** the homework!"

Motto: Just... "**Get by**"

Why do they fail?

It's obvious, isn't it? However, some people still need it spelled out for them. So... if you are lazy student, then maybe it's time you recognize the need to do a little more work?

After all, would it *really* harm you to actually put a *little* effort into your studies? You want to know the best part of doing a little extra work instead of "just enough" to get by?

You'll *surprise* yourself!



You'll find talent you didn't know you had and you'll prove to yourself that you **CAN** do it!

There is nothing better to take into an exam than self-confidence except, of course, *knowledge*.

Knowledge and self-confidence go hand and hand.

If you've done the work you have the knowledge. If you've got the knowledge you're confident.

If you've got confidence ***and*** knowledge...
you've got **a pass** on your exam!



My Advice:

Surprise yourself. Give yourself a one-month (or one week, if you're *that* lazy) commitment of **really** trying. See for yourself that you can do it and who knows...

I've seen many lazy students become quite diligent once they learn how to succeed.

Remember, success (like failure) is learned!!

Learn how to succeed!

It only takes a little (*more*) effort.



2.) The DILIGENT STUDENT



Some may find it odd that a diligent student could fail an exam. Students who are always early for class, do all their homework and have lots of questions sound like a teachers dream, right? Well, yes, they can be. However, I've seen **diligent students fail** exams for a couple of **basic** reasons...



Quote: “Do you want us to do the **extra exercises** from the work book?”

Motto: Do all that’s asked and... **then some!**

Why do they fail?

Believe it or not, diligent students fail exams for two basic reasons.

1.) They are so caught up in being diligent students that they don’t **actually** learn what’s important for the exams they are taking. They only see **the trees** and don’t take time to look at the forest. There’s nothing wrong with detail.

But detail for detail’s sake - is missing the larger point.

2.) **Stress.** Time and again I’ve seen good, diligent students fail exams based on nothing more than stress. In fact, they **overstress** the importance or magnitude of the exam to such a degree that they actually lose the ability to function when it comes time for the exam.



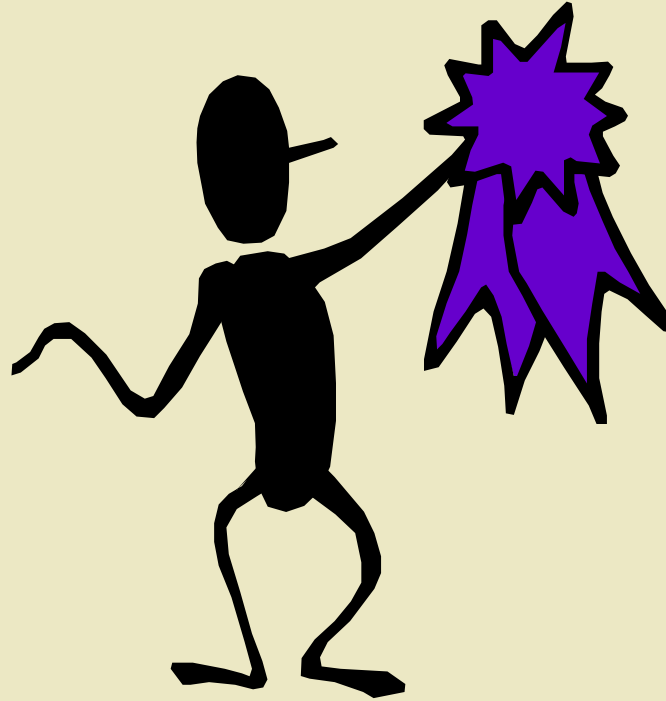
My Advice:

I advise my “diligent” students to **take a walk** before the exam. I tell them to look at the people going about their daily lives and routines. Once they see that it really is, “just another day,” it helps them put the exam into perspective. After all, the result of one exam...

is NOT the end of the world !!



3.) The KNOW IT ALL



The “know it all” is the most difficult student to teach. After all, they already know everything... just **ask** them! When it’s time for them to actually learn something useful they usually **miss it** because they are so busy telling you what **they** know.



Quote: I know !!

Motto: Dazzle them with brilliance or baffle them with %&\$^##@ !

Why do they fail?

Let's face it. Know it alls are usually intelligent. Not always too *likable* but...
But intelligence is not the only thing that's needed to succeed on exams, is it?

Success on exams is the result of intelligence *applied*. It's about learning material relevant to what you will be examined over **NOT** knowing what the square root of 34,231 is. In other words, **wisdom** (which is knowledge, **applied**) is needed to pass exams.

Wisdom and knowledge are NOT synonyms!



My Advice:

Close your mouth! An appropriate proverb states that God gave us two ears and one mouth because we need to do **twice** as much listening as speaking. “Know it all” students may be intelligent but aren’t always wise. If you’re a “know it all” try listening to your teacher for a change, **really** try listening... you just may be impressed by what others know that you don’t!



4.) The CLASS CLOWN

There's usually one in every class. Always, I mean, **always** making fun of something (anything) in class. Usually it's a guy but when there are no guys to fill the role girls do just fine. Don't get me wrong...

There's nothing wrong with fun in the classroom.

There is something wrong when fun, for the sake of fun, interferes with the learning process and the lesson at hand. The problem with class clowns is... they never seem to know when **enough is enough!**



Quote: Did you hear the one about _____? **Aha ha ha ha ha aha aha !**

Motto: **Life's short... Let's have fun!!!**

Why do they fail?

Class clowns are often **weak** students. They mask their academic weakness with a sense of humor. Often CC's have difficulty learning.

Even a great effort on their part produces ***marginal*** results. This, of course, leads to discouragement. Discouraged students, those who stop trying, (especially those with less than stellar academic abilities) **often fail.**



My Advice:

Clowns need to tone it down a bit. If you're a CC, you need to find a way to make *learning* fun. There's nothing wrong with having fun as long as your work is finished *and* you know the material. Do you know the material? If the answer is no (be honest) then get to work and **stop** clowning around for a change.

After all, *failure* is nothing to laugh about!



5.) The WHINER

The whiner is never happy with **anything**. They use a specific tone (whine) of voice to get their way. If the teacher gives homework... they complain (whine) that it's too much. If the teacher doesn't give homework... they complain that there's **no** homework!

Whiners find fault with **everything**.

They find fault with others while unable to see their own weaknesses. They may do their work... however, they do so **reluctantly!**



Quote: That's too much homework... I'll never get it done **by Wednesday!**
Or...
30 minutes... **that's not enough time!**

Motto: Whine, whine, and whine!

Why do they fail?

Whiners are one step away from being **Blamers**. If whiners' would spend only half the time and energy they spend whining... they just might become **exceptional** students.

Whiners' concentrate on the wrong things!

If they would stop whining for a second, they would see that the teacher is there to help them. The homework teachers assign isn't some form of punishment. It's actually meant to **help...**



My Advice:

If you want to whine or complain... become a member of parliament...
(or better yet) ... get ***married!***

That doesn't mean that there aren't times when you have the right to complain. However, (like many things both, good and bad) what we do on a regular basis becomes habit.

Nobody,

I mean just nobody,

likes a habitual whiner.



6.) The BLAMER

Blamers are one step beyond whiners and complainers. They actually blame situations, events, circumstances, **foreign governments** as well as anything, everything and anyone for **their** failure... or lack of success.

Blamers have a “victim” mentality.

Their greatest problem is accepting personal responsibility. It never occurs to them that they are **personally responsible** for the academic situation they are in. Just how long can you keep blaming the teacher you had **three years ago** for your lack of ability now?



Quote: “It’s not *my* fault!!”

Motto: **Blame! Blame! Blame!**

Even if it is my fault... find something, anything... or better yet, **someone...** to blame!

Why do they fail?

Blamers don’t accept personal responsibility. They haven’t “grown up” in a sense. They blame anything and anyone for their failures and lack of success. Blamers are often **weak** students who actually need to put in extra work. They often choose the path of least resistance and... bingo! A blamer is born. If you find yourself blaming **others** for **your failure**, please read what follows, very carefully.

Remember, I’m *trying* to help... ;-)



My Advice:

Grow up already! Make a commitment to yourself to **stop** blaming others for your failures.

Ask for help!

You'll be surprised at how many people there are around you willing and capable of helping you. **Watch what you say!** The next time you're blaming someone or something for **your** failure, remember the old adage...

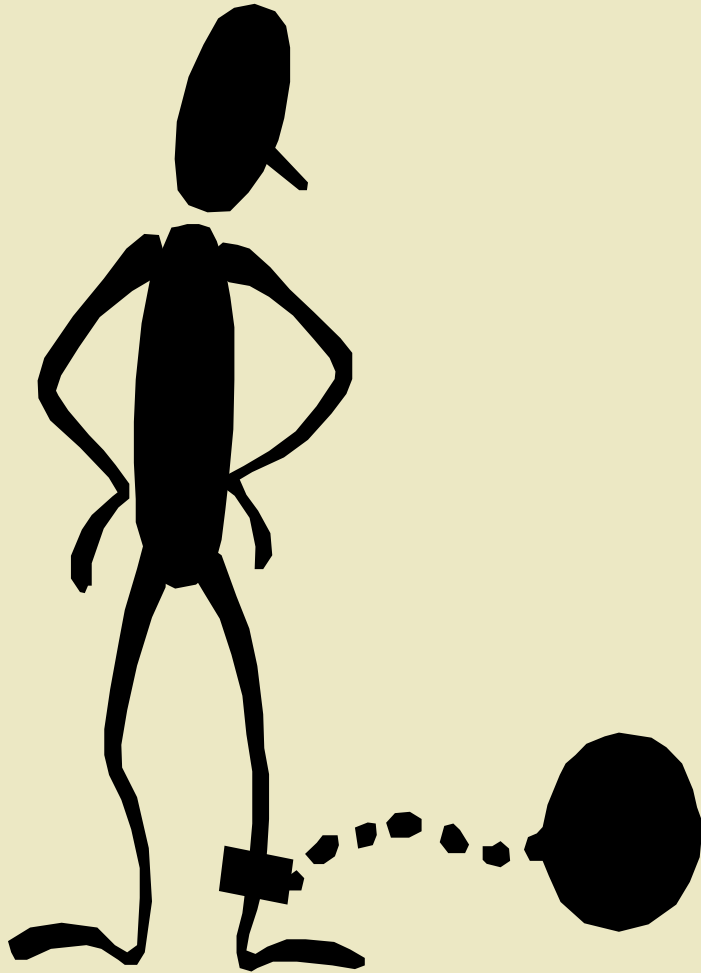
“When you point **one** finger at someone else...
you are pointing **three** fingers back at yourself.”

Accepting personal responsibility is an important step towards avoiding failure and **learning** to succeed!



7.)

The WORRIER



Worriers are a unique class of students unto themselves. They can be (and usually are) strong students but lack (seemingly) **confidence** in their abilities.

The problem with the worrier isn't their ability or lack thereof. The problem with worriers is that they waste so much time and energy worrying about the **wrong** things.

They worry about things that they have no control over instead of **focusing** on the things they **do** have control over...



Quote: “But what if...” Or, Yes, but if it wasn’t like this, *could it be like...?*

Motto: Take it... Do it... Try it... *just in case!!*

Why do they fail?

Worriers tend to **overstress** themselves. A little tension before an exam is normal and expected. Too much stress is *counter-productive*. Worriers often lack *perspective*. They overstress themselves worrying about things that are not in their control. Worriers create unnecessary and excessive stress.

They tend to **over-emphasize** the importance of an exam.

All exams are important but let’s try to be a bit realistic, shall we?



My Advice:

Worriers need to learn *perspective*. Talk to someone else about **their** experience with the exam. See yourself as **not** being so unique. Many, many, MANY other students have accomplished the very thing you are trying to do.

Are they **SO** different from you?

Smarter?

What makes **YOU** so unique?

Exactly!

Now stop worrying about the things you **can't** control and get to work learning in the areas you **can** control. Grammar **can** be learned. Vocabulary **can** be Learned. Good writing skills **can** be learned. Listening and speaking skills **can** also be learned. Just so you know... Confidence is a great substitute for worry.

Why not try it?

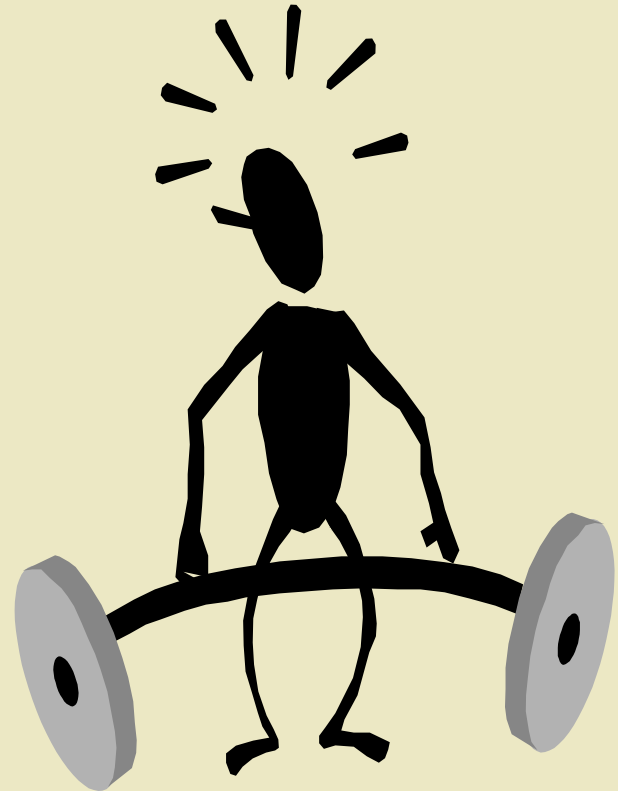


8.) The WEAK STUDENT

Just as some people are *physically* stronger than others, some students are **weaker** than others.

Everyone has strengths and weaknesses.

Weak students should learn something from... bodybuilders. What can that be, you ask? Well, how does a body builder make his/her muscles big and strong? That's right. He exercises them ... and they **grow!** Weak students have been disguising their weaknesses with humor, excuses and help from friends, did I say excuses?... **For years...**



They didn't arrive at the Proficiency level of English and **suddenly** become weak students.



Quote: It's too hard!! Or I can't do it!

Motto: Keep my head down... and the teacher will call on ***someone else!***

Why do they fail?

Weak students often go through their school years *undetected*. They are never really **so** weak that they call the attention of their teachers or school officials.

By the time they get to **Proficiency exam level**, they have large gaps in their knowledge. Unless something is done to fill those gaps, weak students are headed for failure on their exam. Teachers may recognize that something needs to be done... but they are usually **too** busy dealing with the rest of the class to do what is necessary to give weak students their best chance at success.

I know this seems sad and unfair...

but I did say I would be **honest**, right?



My Advice:

If the preceding describes you and your circumstance...

please do the following.

Revise !!

Find a good personal tutor (many times your teacher would be willing to help if you would just **ask!**) and spend the time and money you need to complete a thorough and exhaustive (from a-z) revision of English grammar.

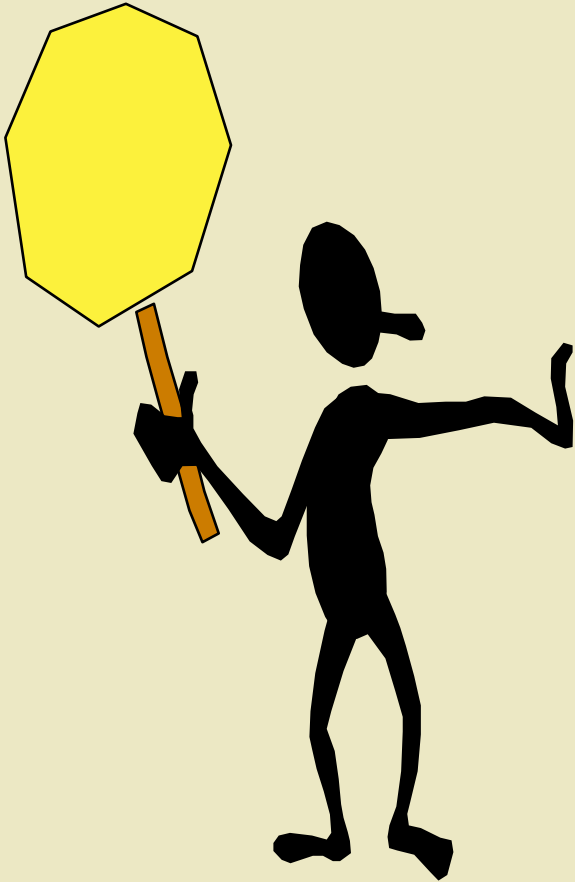
Really *learn* it!

All of it!

Once you've accomplished *that*... send me an e-mail and I'll tell you what *else* needs to be done. :-)



9.) The OBSTINATE STUDENT



Some of the most difficult students to teach are **obstinate** students. Obstinate students are a combination of other student types, with the added characteristic of... **NOT** listening to a word the teacher says. They **reject** help and advice as if the teacher were there to confuse them... not help them.

Obstinate students truly *amaze* me.

If you don't want your teacher's experience, help and advice, then **why on earth** are you in their classroom?



Quote: Yes, **BUT**.... (in case you didn't know... *yes, but*...really means **NO!**)

Or...

No! I think it should be....

Or...

Your way is nice... but I like *my way* better!

Motto: Ok, Ok, *I'll agree...* **for now...** but I **still** think I'm right!

Why do they fail?

Obstinate students fail for obvious reasons. After “disagreeing” with their teacher about some point that **doesn't** need to be disagreed with, they usually remember the point **they** argued instead of the point the teacher was trying to make (which is most probably the **right** answer).

Therefore, the knowledge they retain is **flawed!**

Just because **you** believe you are right, it doesn't mean you actually **are** right!



My Advice:

Normally I would say... **grow up** and listen to your teacher... but I know that that advice doesn't work on you so I will tell you this. Consider, just maybe... for a moment... that what you so **certainly believe** to be right... could actually be wrong?!

Stop fighting over things of little importance and put your stubbornness to work by **actually learning** the language!

As a wise person once said, “someone convinced against their will is of the same opinion still.” If what you believe differs from that of what your teacher is teaching, (with regard to the English language, that is) then maybe it's time you took a little advice. After all, your teacher is there for your benefit... not your harm, whether you **agree** with me... **or not!**



10.) SMARTY PANTS



Smarty Pants ask questions to show how smart they are... **NOT** to learn anything that has anything to do with the lesson. Smarty Pants are often teachers or those diligent students who seem to want to know things that will **never...in a million years...** be tested on the exam. The questions they ask are not geared towards learning... they are to show the teacher and everyone else in the class **how smart they are!** SP's usually have a bit of the obstinate in them along with a touch of the lazy.



Quote: If this example said “_____” (which it doesn’t) would the answer be “_____” (which it isn’t)
Or...
Yes, but the rule says... (Remember what “**yes, but**” means?)

Motto: Questions, Questions, **and more** Questions...

Why do they fail?

Smarty Pants should put their “smarts” to work preparing for the exam. As stated before, they usually have a touch of the lazy and a bit of the obstinate that can make for some real problems. If Smarty Pants has a tendency to **procrastinate**, (which they often do) then even SP’s can fail an exam or two... at which point they promptly turn into a **BLAMER**.

It’s usually not just **one** thing that keeps SP’s from succeeding; it’s a **combination** of things.



My Advice:

Try limiting your questions to **relevant** material. Don't wait for the last minute thinking you can “**cram**” in a whole list of unknown words the weekend before the exam... **YOU CANT!**

This is a language we are talking about, NOT mathematics. You can't learn it in a weekend!

It takes **time** to develop your vocabulary. Show how smart you **really** are... by taking some expert advice...

Don't tell me how smart you are... **show** me.

Actions, as you know, **speak louder than words.**

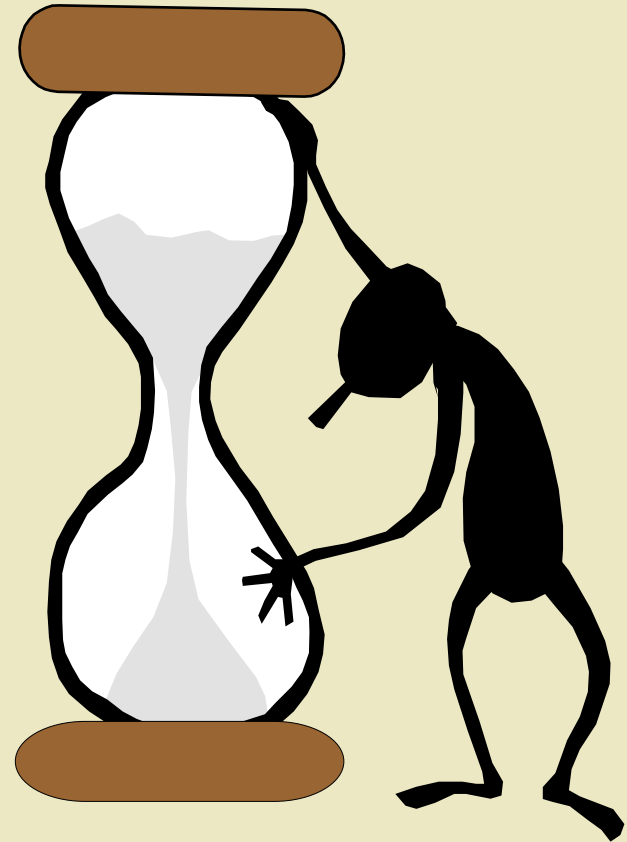


11.) The PROCRASTINATOR

The Procrastinator tends to wait until the very last minute to do **anything**. As with laziness, we all tend to procrastinate from time to time. The “problem” with procrastinators is that they are often good students... once they get to work.

By waiting until the last minute, they add **unnecessary** stress to an already stressful situation.

But more importantly, they **fail to do** the necessary work.



Quote: “I’ll do it next _____” [insert day and time]

Or...

“I was going to do it on _____” [insert day and time]

Motto: Postpone, stall... find... *something... anything... else to do.*

Why do they fail?

Procrastinators’ sometimes fail because they wait **too** long before they get busy learning the subject at hand.

I’ve seen more procrastinators (good, smart students) fail than most other types of students.

I believe it has to do with the fact that language at the Proficiency level simply **can’t** be learned in a **short** period of time. In other words, **cramming**, doesn’t work! Sure, you can learn about the test in a short period of time – but **NOT** the language.



My Advice:

You *know* what I'm going to say before I say it, right? You've heard it all before... or *have* you? My advice is... **procrastinate!** Wait until the last minute to do your work... *but*... and this is a BIG **BUT**, do **all** of the exercises and learn all of the words that have been assigned.

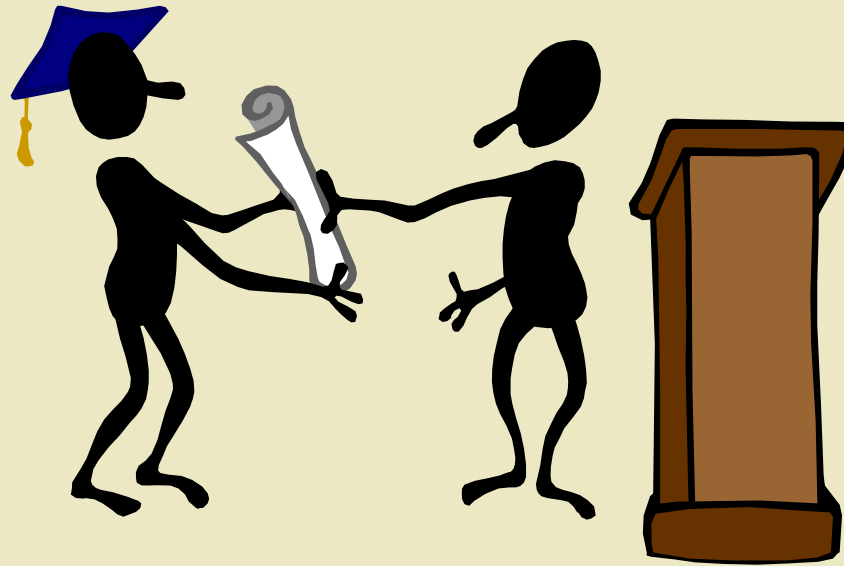
ALL OF THEM !

You can procrastinate all you want so long as you do all the work. What few procrastinators are willing to admit is that deep, deep down... ***they are lazy!***

What happens to procrastinators over and over again is that they fail to finish their homework. Sure they can come up with a variety of **good reasons** (I've heard them all) but the fact is that most procrastinators fail to do their work. Lack of work equals lack of knowledge; lack of knowledge equals poor results on your language exam! Oh sure, you can argue with me all you want. But in the end (if you're honest with yourself) you *know* I'm right.



12.) The GOOD STUDENT



Some would question the wisdom of including a chapter on good students. After all, good students do their work, come to class prepared and on time, they participate and they question their mistakes. In a word, good students **learn!** They take advantage of all that is at their disposal and make the most of it. So, then, how can good students... *fail?*



Quote: I don't understand this answer... why is it like this... and not like that?

Or...

Can you explain that again please, I didn't quite "**get it**"?

Motto: Work **first**... play **later**! Or... **Let's get down to business!**

Why do they fail?

Good students **DON'T** usually fail exams. So, **why** do they, you ask? Well, sometimes bad things happen to good people. Life is unfair. I've seen good students that **I was certain** would pass their exam and, guess what?

They failed !

Likewise, I've seen **not** so good students **pass** exams that they weren't really ready for. There are no certain explanations. Perhaps the good student had a "bad day" and the not so good student had an "exceptionally good day." The number of variables concerning **any** given exam is too many for an absolute certainty as to why someone failed or passed.



My Advice:

Whether you're a good student or not so good student you should do **everything** within your power to ensure success on your exam. Reading this book was **a positive first step** toward achieving your goal.

If you saw yourself in these pages then may I encourage you to **re-read** the advice I gave to that particular student. After you re-read the advice, do yourself a favor and **follow it**.

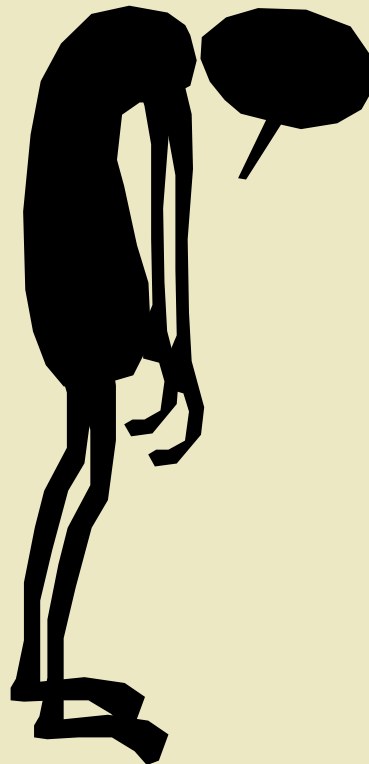
As I said in the beginning of this book, I can share with you **HOW to succeed**.

Whether or not you do, is **in large part up to you!**



Epilogue

Well, what did you think? I told you this book was easy and humorous. There is **nothing** humorous, however, about **failing exams**.... especially exams that you have spent a lot of time and money preparing for, right?



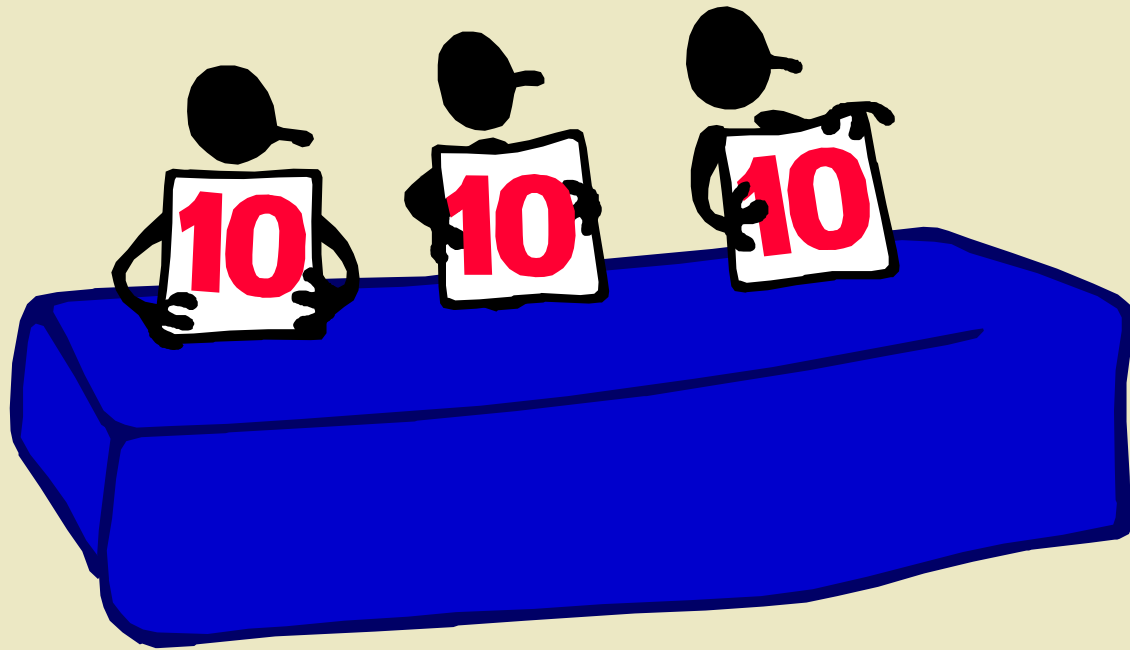
I invite you to return to our web site for even more information about the exam you are thinking of taking. You'll find expert advice and techniques on how to master **each section** of the test thereby...

increasing your chances for success!



Again, **our web site**, and this book have been designed with one purpose in mind.





YOUR SUCCESS !



If you have any questions about our **site**,
or comments about this book...

Feel free to contact me **personally**.

(Just click on personally)

Wishing you great success!
Todd

ps. I'd really love to hear from you.



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Thanks, and good luck on your exams!

