

Unit 3: Writing online (1)

SUMMARY

You can use this summary to guide the learning objectives and target setting for your class.

Can-do statements:

By the end of this unit, students will be able to say:

- I can identify the level of formality in an online forum.
- I can use hedging language to sound more polite.
- I can give my opinion in both a formal and informal way.

Skill focus

Informal writing:

Looking closely ②, Language focus ① ② ③ ④,

Get writing ①

Formal writing:

Looking closely ① ②, Get writing ②

Vocabulary

Informal language: *could do with, food for thought, pick up, skip*

Hedging language: *seem to, tend to, could, may well*

Usage

Using hedging language

CLASSROOM EXTENSION IDEAS

You can use some or all of these ideas to check and enhance your students' understanding as they work their way through *Unit 3 of Writing B2+ Upper Intermediate* in class.

Using Getting started

1. Put the class into groups or pairs to answer the questions.
2. Discuss the forums that students have used. Ask what sort of discussions students have been involved in and why they enjoy participating in forums. Ask students who do not currently use forums whether they have been inspired to participate more, and why / why not.

Using Looking closely

1. Before reading, study the layout of the forum. Ask students to discuss these questions in groups:
 - a. What is the topic of the forum? (*Answer: travel*)
 - b. What type of people is the website aimed at? (*Answer: people who are planning their travels*)
 - c. What are three topics that might be discussed on this forum? (*Possible answer: where to go, what to visit, what to take*)
2. Complete *Question 1*. Then ask students to read the text and identify:

a. Nelly4's advice (*Answer: Visit more places in South America*)

b. FishMD's advice (*Answer: Avoid New Zealand and spend more time in South America*)

3. Ask students to discuss what they would advise Stefano to do. They should then write a short post (no more than two sentences) with their advice. Ask students to share their posts in small groups, and for each group to choose one piece of advice to share with the class.
4. Complete *Exercise 2*. Ask students to make a list of phrases and features that helped them decide that the text is informal. (*Suggested answers: Hey guys, could do with, do 3–4 months in, use of capitals for emphasis (VERY), lack of capitals (i'm), use of exclamation marks, use of phrasal verbs (picking up)*)
5. Tell students to highlight the phrasal verbs in the texts and check understanding. (*Answers: picking up a job (get a job), look at (investigate), factor in (include)*)

Using Language focus

1. Complete *Question 1*. Check understanding of the informal words and phrases by asking students to discuss the following questions in small groups:
 - a. What could you do with right now?
 - b. How can students in your city pick up a job?
 - c. Has anyone given you a suggestion which you found *food for thought*?
 - d. What happens at your school if you skip a class?

Ask each group to feed back an answer to one of the questions. Students could write example sentences in their vocabulary notebooks using these phrases.

2. Complete *Exercise 2* and ask students to read the *Language note*. There is a cultural note to tell students here too, i.e. that in the UK, sounding less sure of yourself, e.g. through using hedging language, is considered more polite. Ask students whether this is true in their own country or not and discuss other situations where hedging language might be appropriate.
3. Give each student a copy of the photocopiable sheet *Hedging language*. Ask them to complete *Exercise 1* and compare their answers with a partner.
(*Suggested answers:*
 - 1 Wages in the north of the country are low.
 - 2 Stay in New Zealand for a month.
 - 3 The people in the south aren't as friendly as those in the north.
 - 4 People are sportier in Australia than in Britain because the weather is better there.
 - 5 Visiting the market is stressful for tourists because the stallholders pester them.

Tell students to write the hedging language they identified in their notebooks, along with an example sentence of their own so that they know how it is used. (Answers: **1** *tend to, a little, on the ... side* **2** *I suppose, you could, around, or so* **3** *On the whole, seem to me to be, a bit* **4** *be inclined to, a bit, may well, in general, tend to, somewhat* **5** *can be, rather, tend to, somewhat*)

4. Ask students to complete *Exercise 2* on the photocopiable sheet. Compare answers. Note that answers will vary.
(Suggested answers:
1 *Your travel plans seem to be a bit on the impractical side.* **2** *The hotel tends to be a bit noisy and it can be rather smelly.* **3** *Travelling by bus can be a bit uncomfortable because the seats tend to be somewhat small.* **4** *You may well find the ruins a bit disappointing because they can get rather crowded.* **5** *Personally, I wouldn't take children to Scotland in the summer, because it tends to rain.*)
4. Complete *Exercises 3 and 4 of Language focus* and check answers as a class.
5. Tell students to look back at the reply they wrote to Stefano in *Looking closely, Step 3*. They should rewrite their post incorporating:
 - hedging language
 - phrasal verbs
 - informal expressions
 - informal punctuation

Using *Looking closely*

1. Ask students to look at the forum on page 18 and to decide who the forum is aimed at (users of a local park). Put them into pairs and give them two minutes to think about what issues may be discussed on this forum.
2. Complete *Exercises 1 and 2*.
3. Ask students to identify which posters agree with the bill (Answer: *Xavier and Betty M*).
4. Ask students to discuss in pairs or groups their own opinion about this issue. Tell them to write a short two-sentence post expressing their opinion. Discuss some ideas as a class.

Using *Language focus*

1. Complete *Exercise 1*.
2. Ask students to rewrite some of the sentences containing formal vocabulary or phrases in a less formal tone. Tell them to rephrase the whole sentence rather than looking for informal synonyms.
3. Complete *Question 2* and read the *Useful tips*.
4. Ask students to rewrite or amend their post from *Looking closely, Step 4*, incorporating two of the features from *Exercise 2* and using advice from the *Useful tips*.

Optional extension activity: *Speaking and Writing*

1. Choose a topical issue or use one of these suggestions: *A new motorway through the local countryside, A new wind farm in an area of natural beauty, A new supermarket in a small town.*
2. Write the following people on the board: *a student, a parent of young children, an elderly man, a businessperson, an environmentalist.*
3. Each student should take the role of one of the people. They should consider how this person would feel about the issue and make brief notes.
4. Line students up in the classroom in two rows of equal numbers of students facing each other. Students pair up with the student opposite them. Students should introduce themselves in their role and discuss how they feel about the issue. Encourage students to react appropriately to the other person's point of view. After a couple of minutes, move one row of students along the line so that they have a new partner. Repeat the activity up to five times.
5. Students complete the exercise by writing a forum post outlining how they feel about the issue.

Using *Get writing*

1. Ask students to complete these *pre-writing* tasks:

Exercise 1

- Get students to brainstorm possible answers to *Exercise 1* in pairs or small groups. Advise them that accuracy is not important here.
- Tell students to look back at the posts on page 16 and pick out two phrases or language features they can use for each of the texts they are to write.

Exercise 2

- Get students to read the posts and discuss possible suggestions in small groups.
2. Set *Exercises 1 and 2* as homework or as a timed class activity. You can set both tasks or choose one or the other. Highlight that you expect them to respond with an appropriate level of formality, so they should look back over the unit and consider how they can do this.

Using *Next steps*

1. If you have access to computers, you can do this part during class time. If not, you can set it as homework.
2. If you do not have access to computers, you can have your own class forum. Hand out a blank piece of paper to each student. Tell them to write an opening post giving some information about themselves and why they are seeking advice. Then ask them to pass the paper to the next person in class, who should read the post and write a response below it. Repeat four more times and then return the page to the original poster. Share any particularly funny or interesting responses with the class.

PHOTOCOPIABLES

Hedging language

1. Identify the hedging and vague language in these sentences. Then rewrite the sentences, removing all hedging/vague language.

1. Wages in the north of the country tend to be a little bit on the low side.

2. I suppose you could stay in New Zealand for around a month or so.

3. On the whole, the people in the south seem to me to be a bit less friendly than those in the north.

4. The reason why people are inclined to be a bit sportier in Australia than in Britain may well be because in general the weather tends to be somewhat better there.

5. Visiting the market can be rather stressful for tourists because the stallholders tend to pester them somewhat.

2. Rewrite these sentences using some of the hedging language from the example sentences above.

1. Your travel plans are impractical.

2. The hotel is noisy and it smells bad.

3. Travelling by bus is uncomfortable because the seats are small.

4. You'll be disappointed by the ruins because they're always crowded.

5. Don't take children to Scotland in summer because it always rains.
