

English support
Business House (PO Box 618)
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4000 Roskilde

News & Tips

from

English support

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No. **50** – January 2009

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**Happy New Year
to all our readers!**

Dear friends

We enter 2009 with the **50th** issue of this newsletter. The first issue of *News & Tips* came out in November 2004 and, except for the slight hitch in October-November last year, it has appeared every month since. The start of this year also marks 5 years of our existence as a company, which we hope you will come and help us celebrate on **Thursday 22nd January** (see page 4 for more details).



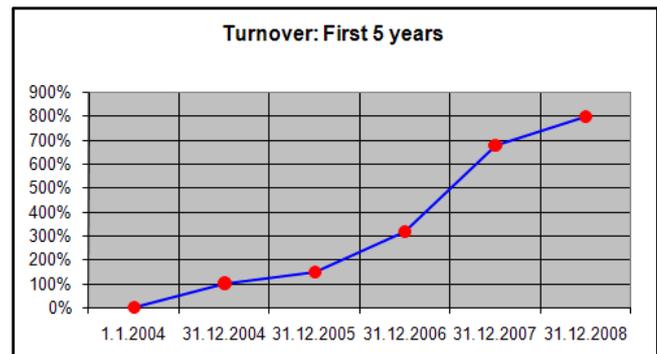
Good, but could do better!

2008 was a good year for *English support*. Turnover was up 17% over the previous year. But this is, of course, a rather modest increase compared with those of the previous two years.

We cannot blame the banking crisis; our customers are extremely loyal and we already have pre-orders and sales this year for more than two-thirds of last year's turnover.

But we do seem to be reaching the limits of what can be achieved with our current company structure.

While our network of native-speaker language experts continues to expand, we have neither been able to make full use of their skills nor develop our website as planned and projected over the last two years. These two things hang together and reflect a time problem.



Vision for 2009

Clearly some changes are necessary. For one thing, I cannot continue to work such long hours as I currently do. On the other hand, this business is as solidly based as any company our size could hope to be in the current economic climate. So changes will be deliberate, gradual, and unfold month by month over the course of the year.

By the end of 2009, the aim is to fulfil the entire range of goals presented in these pages in January over the years. These include a reworking of our web pages so that they more fully represent our teaching activities and the language capacities of our network. Our customers, not least those who sign up for our *Hotline* service (see below), will receive an even better service. Our network of freelancers will experience increasing opportunities to work for us. And you, our readers, will see improvements in this newsletter to make it even more useful in your work.

In short, we want to gear up for continuing rapid growth in our turnover and impact. ☺

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From the workshop...

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Do and make

There are a lot of expressions that use one or other of these verbs, but the fundamental meaning difference between them is that you *do actions* and you *make things*.

Do

So we use *do* when talking about an *action* of some kind – even if you do not know what it is:

- e.g. *What are you doing?*
- I like doing nothing.*
- I don't know what to do*
- Do something!*

And *do* is usually the right word when talking about any kind *work*:

- e.g. *Have you done your homework?*
- I am not going to do any work today.*
- I hate doing the cooking and shopping and cleaning and washing up!*
- Let's get a maid to do all the boring jobs.*

Do is also used in a relatively *small* number of common expressions, all concerned with actions:

- e.g. *do business*
- do good / harm / damage*
- do one's best / worst*
- do someone a favour / a good turn / a good deed*

Make

Make is usually more concerned with the product than the process:

- e.g. *Let's make some bread.*
- My grandfather once made me a small sailing-boat.*

This can also be seen in some of the very *large* number of expressions using *make*:

- e.g. *make a plan / a noise / a profit / a loss.*

But in many other expressions using *make*, this focus on the product is, shall we say, less clear:

- e.g. *make a phone call / a mistake / an offer*
- make a suggestion / an arrangement*
- make an attempt / an effort / a mistake*
- make an exception / an excuse*
- make an appointment / a decision*
- make money / love / war / peace*
- make the most of something / the best of something, etc., etc., etc.*

There is even an expression to *make do*, which means to *put up with having very little*.

Since there are so many expressions with *make*, one way of picking up some very useful vocabulary quickly is to look up the word *make* in a dictionary and see how many expressions using it you know!

Economics revisited

As I was preparing this newsletter, including the answers to last month's Christmas quiz (page 5), I discovered that *News & Tips* no. 5 contains a mistake that could mislead people trying to sort out sentence no. 5 in the quiz.

While the word *economics* is normally treated as a singular (as stated in *N&T* no. 5), this is not the case in quiz sentence no. 5, which read: "*The economics of the agreement mean that the staff gets a pay rise every year*". Here the word refers not to the *subject* or *field* of economics, but to the *financial aspects* of the deal. In this sense, the meaning is plural.

Please note that this does not mean that this sense of the word *economics* has a singular form, as with the plural meaning of *ethics* (see *N&T* no.5), *lyrics* and *statistics* (see no. 28). On the contrary, *economics* in the sense of *financial aspects* is always plural and always preceded by the definite article: *the economics of the agreement*. This makes it a bit like *the police* ☺ [see next page].

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From the workshop...

Plural uncountables

Talking about *the police* brings us naturally on to plural uncountables.

Most uncountables are singular (*education, money, progress*, etc.) and this applies to words that look as though they might be plural (*gymnastics, news, politics*, etc) – see *News & Tips* no.5.

But English (like Danish) also has plural uncountables. These are words that are always plural but cannot be counted. Danes often laugh when I tell them that *money* is uncountable in English, but the Danish word *penge* is also uncountable; the only difference is that the Danish word is also plural.

Examples of plural uncountables are *clothes, credentials, earnings, outskirts, surroundings, thanks*, etc. In each case, these words are both plural and uncountable.

The police are a special case. Unlike most uncountable plurals, it does not look plural. In fact it looks as if it might be a collective noun, like *crowd* or *family* or *government*, and take a singular verb when the focus is on the *group*, but a plural when the focus is on the *members* of the group (see *News & Tips* no. 4).

But *the police* are not like that. The noun is always plural and always uncountable and always preceded by the definite article. So even if just *one* policeman called round to see you, we might say “*The police were here to see you*”. And if there were two of them, we could **not** say “*Two police were here ...*”, but would have to say “*Two policemen were here to see you*”.

So watch out for the police! ☺

Care and caution

These two words overlap a little in meaning, which sometimes leads people to choose the wrong word in the context.

If I treat something (or someone) with *care*, the focus is usually on the way I am trying to avoid causing damage or injury to the thing or person. Just occasionally, however, the context may make it clear that I am avoiding harm to myself.

If I treat something (or someone) with *caution*, on the other hand, it definitely means I am trying to avoid the risk of harm to myself.

Careful and cautious

The adjectives retain the basic meaning difference of the noun forms, except that *careful* is used much more often in the sense of avoiding harm to oneself, as in: “*Be careful!*” So the use of the word *cautious* often implies a psychological state of hesitation or uncertainty, as in: “*He was cautious about buying shares in the company*”.

Did you know?

English support can offer you **native-speaker** translation and proofreading help with not only *English*, but also *Bangla, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Kurdish, Malay, Nepali, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian* and *Urdu*.

And if YOU can translate from at least one foreign language, speak English or Danish, and are a native speaker of Arabic, Greek, Greenlandic, Swahili, Welsh, etc., we'd like to hear from you!

Questions & Answers

(Edited)

If you did not receive this newsletter by e-mail, you will need to subscribe if you want it again. It's FREE. Get on the mailing list via the website!

More on challenge!

Hi Lawrence

Isn't it "face the challenge" and "take up the challenge"?!

Last month, in answer to another reader, I suggested *meet the challenge*, as in "She met the challenge of being self-employed with her characteristic courage".

The two suggested above are also possible, but the second in particular conjures up more of the original metaphor of responding to a challenge to duel to the death.

Being self-employed is not *really* like facing a medieval knight in full armour, but if you like that image, use it! The nice thing about *meeting challenges* is that no one is likely to think of the original blood and gore. ☺

University names and job titles

The same reader says:

My dictionary says vice-chancellor for "universitetsrektor" – how about that?

Vice-chancellor is certainly the usual British equivalent, but we don't call all the finance ministers in other European countries the *Chancellor of the Exchequer* either! ☺ *Rector* is the normal word in respect of European universities and some British ones.

Where there is some special term in Britain, we do not usually use that in the context of another country. For instance, we don't call the *Metro* in Paris, Moscow or Copenhagen *the Tube* or *the Underground* just because that is what we call it in London.

So extreme care needs to be taken in such cases. Another example in my view is the common translation of the Danish *Lov* with *Act*, as in *Act of Parliament*. I cannot really think of any justification for calling laws passed by the Danish Parliament *Acts*, and it does not reflect normal English-speaking practice with respect of the laws passed by other non-English speaking parliaments. We have a perfectly normal word, *Law*, which seems much more appropriate, since the word *Act* is a special term in the British legal system.

Come and help us celebrate the first FIVE YEARS of English support!

English support will be holding an open house arrangement to celebrate our fifth birthday.

The company officially started on 1st January 2004, but we had this sneaking feeling not many people would come on New Years Day, so we are holding it from 3–6 pm on **Thursday 22nd January**.

The programme will include welcome drinks, a little talk on the past five years, a buffet "high tea" (that means standing up in this case) with lots of very English things to eat and drink, a bit of entertainment from "the office staff" (and maybe others), and closing remarks on the next five years, before we finish.

So we are very much hoping you'll come and join us! ☺

Please let us know via the website, using this link: <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/fiveyears.htm>

We look forward to seeing you then.

Best wishes to all our readers in the year to come!

Lawrence White
LW@englishsupport.dk

OPEN HOUSE

An afternoon's entertainment starring

Claire Clausen

Michael de Laine

Lawrence White

(and, with a bit of luck, others, too)

on

Thursday 22nd January

roughly between the hours of 3 and 6 pm

at

English support

Business House

Jernbanegade 23 B

Roskilde

Denmark

(that's the bit sticking out of the top of Germany)

Please let us know you're coming!

[<http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/fiveyears.htm>]

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Your natural language partner

(4)

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Xmas quiz answers

Test your English... (See News & Tips No. 49)

The "proofreading corrections" below show answers to last month's quiz. ☺

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. We would like to inform <u>you</u> that we specialise in English. | Slettet: are |
| 2. We will <u>have finished</u> in six months. | Slettet: d |
| 3. The people for who <u>m</u> he worked thought he was good at his job. The people he worked <u>for</u> thought he was good at his job. | Slettet: for who |
| 4. The news <u>is</u> that a number of cases of piracy <u>have</u> been reported. | Slettet: are |
| 5. The economics of the agreement mean that the staff get a pay rise every year. | Slettet: has |
| 6. I <u>am working</u> hard at the moment, because we <u>have</u> a lot of customers. | Slettet: s |
| 7. I look forward to <u>hearing</u> from you, but will <u>get back to you</u> if I do not. | Slettet: are having |
| 8. He claimed that the Sun is about ninety-three million miles away. | Slettet: revert |
| 9. She saw an <u>ad</u> in the paper the other day for a film with <u>Mr</u> Bean. | Slettet: , |
| 10. I <u>will be</u> out of <u>the</u> office until 2 nd January. | Slettet: s of |
| 11. The staff drink <u>all kinds</u> of beer after work. | Slettet: d |
| 12. <u>Some</u> of the apprentices should stay on after completing their apprenticeship. | Slettet: m |
| 13. There are things you should buy, <u>for</u> example an umbrella, in case <u>it</u> rains. | Slettet: . |
| 14. <u>Where</u> were the boxes <u>with</u> a length, width and height of 30 cm? | Slettet: am |
| 15. While in Paris he had the <u>opportunity</u> to visit / <u>option of visiting</u> the Louvre. | Slettet: I |
| 16. We <u>have</u> considerable knowledge and experience about Danish society. | Slettet: s |
| 17. <u>Please note</u> that I <u>lived</u> in London for many years before I moved to Denmark. | Slettet: A part |
| 18. I would appreciate <u>it</u> if you would let me know about your experience <u>in</u> teaching. | Slettet: like |
| 19. If you <u>have no training</u> as a book-keeper, you may lose your job. | Slettet: an |
| 20. Please note that the <u>various</u> requirements are <u>in accordance with</u> the regulations. | Slettet: the |
| 21. He <u>could not get</u> a job because he failed his exams. | Slettet: that |
| 22. To a considerable extent, wind energy can <u>replace</u> fossil-fuel energy. | Slettet: h |
| 23. I would appreciate <u>hearing</u> from you whether you are capable <u>of doing / able</u> to do this job. | Slettet: whit |
| 24. He was looking forward to <u>seeing</u> her although he had difficulty <u>in</u> understanding her English. | Slettet: h |
| 25. She suggested <u>drinking</u> a toast to success. | Slettet: possibility |
| 26. A substantial <u>number</u> of paintings <u>were</u> stolen. | Slettet: hold |
| | Slettet: Be aware |
| | Slettet: have |
| | Slettet: with |
| | Slettet: do not |
| | Slettet: an education |
| | Slettet: o |
| | Slettet: ic |
| | Slettet: different |
| | Slettet: ing to |
| | Slettet: missed having |
| | Slettet: passing |
| | Slettet: d |
| | Slettet: substitute |
| | Slettet: to |
| | Slettet: to |
| | Slettet: to |
| | Slettet: was |

More than 600 topics have been tackled so far in the pages of

News & Tips

You can look them up on the website at: <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/backindex.htm>, and back issues can also be downloaded at: <http://www.englishsupport.dk/EN/backissues.htm>, where it is also possible to download a whole year at a time by clicking on the year heading.

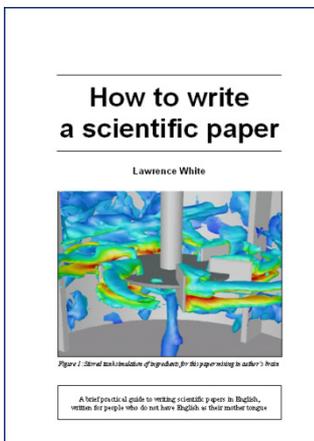
Xmas quiz answers

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(Continued from previous page)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 27. He <u>probably</u> worked in close <u>co-operation / collaboration</u> with someone in the company. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: properly"/> |
| | <input type="text" value="Slettet: corporation"/> |
| 28. I saw an environmentally friendly radio last week – isn't progress wonderful! | <input type="text" value="Slettet: the"/> |
| 29. I spent yesterday playing golf, drinking beer, and talking about the meaning of life. | |
| 30. In <u>recent</u> years, I have had my own company. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: the last"/> |
| 31. In the <u>following</u> , you will find a description of the cottage. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: hereafter"/> |
| | <input type="text" value="Slettet: Y"/> |
| 32. After this course, you will have knowledge <u>of</u> all our products with <u>prices</u> as low as £10. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: on"/> |
| | <input type="text" value="Slettet: z"/> |
| 33. He held a party on Saturday with <u>a</u> few friends. | |
| 34. The <u>principal</u> was wearing his <u>everyday</u> clothes at the time. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: principle"/> |
| | <input type="text" value="Slettet: daily"/> |
| 35. When he <u>comes</u> , tell him I'm not in! | <input type="text" value="Slettet: is coming"/> |
| | <input type="text" value="Slettet: isolating"/> |
| 36. If you are going to Greenland, make sure you take some <u>insulating</u> clothing with you. | |
| 37. If I may <u>advise</u> you, I suggest you check the <u>prices</u> carefully before you buy anything. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: advice"/> |
| | <input type="text" value="Slettet: prizes"/> |
| 38. The transport company had a <u>number</u> of different kinds of vehicle for hire. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: series"/> |
| 39. Mozart was <u>just</u> brilliant. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: only"/> |
| 40. I thought the tea tasted <u>good</u> , and I said so. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: well"/> |
| 41. Please write your name <u>at</u> the top of the sheet. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: in"/> |
| 42. Is she still dependent <u>on</u> him? | <input type="text" value="Slettet: of"/> |
| 43. It is <u>impolite</u> to speak like that. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: un"/> |
| 44. My loss of balance was the <u>effect</u> of drinking too much beer. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: a"/> |
| 45. Three-quarters of the city <u>was</u> destroyed in the earthquake. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: were"/> |
| 46. Did you <u>catch</u> the train all right the other day? | <input type="text" value="Slettet: reach"/> |
| 47. You shoot <u>at</u> a target and hopefully hit it in the middle. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: to"/> |
| 48. He kept smiling <u>although</u> he was very angry. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: despite"/> |
| 49. She <u>divided</u> the Christmas cake into 12 equal pieces. | <input type="text" value="Slettet: parted"/> |

For more information, check the issue of *News & Tips* with the same number.



Do you need to write scientific papers?

“How to write a scientific paper” is an excellent guide – even for the experienced author of scientific articles and reports. It is easy to read and gives good advice about the structure of such papers, the writing process, and a number of the many linguistic traps that authors who do not have English as their mother tongue tend to fall into.

Kurt Lauridsen, MSc, PhD
Danish Decommissioning, Risø

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