A Guide to the Self Access Centre

Helping you ‘take charge’ of your learning

Improve your English language skills through self-study
The SAC provides all students from Year One through to Postgraduate level with English language and academic skills support through self-study. The SAC gives you the opportunity to continue to develop and practice your English language and academic skills independently throughout your time at UNNC.

What does the SAC offer?
- A range of audio and print materials that cover the four skills—Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking
- Advice on how to select relevant material
- An extensive range of Graded Readers covering fiction and non-fiction subjects (these are on general loan)
- Academic skills materials
- A number of English for Specific Purposes and Careers texts

Someone is usually available in the daytime Monday to Friday to offer advice about how to use self-access resources for learning English and improving study skills.

Location and opening hours
The SAC is located in the library (AB308) and has the same opening hours.

SAC learning resources

- **Materials for loan (Only one blue dot sticker on the book spine)**
  You can borrow these including Graded Readers to read outside the library. These books are available on a short period loan.

- **Materials for reference only (One red dot sticker + one blue dot sticker on the book spine)**
  These books can only be used within the SAC. These are very popular books, so please return them to the shelves once you have finished with them. Do not take them out of the room other than for photocopying.

- **Listening materials**
  CDs for the textbooks and some of the Graded Readers are available downstairs from the library circulation desk. Please be considerate and put on headphones when using the CD player or PC. (You can bring your own headphones if you prefer.)

- **EASE**
  This interactive academic listening programme is loaded on the PCs.
Other self study materials
  - The SAC website (http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/csp/sac/)
  - WebCT
    Self access courses are available through self enrolment with your WebCT username and password.
  - Self study materials available for download from the SAC folder on the U drive (U:\Self Access Centre-SAC)
    - Self study log
    - Graded readers activity sheets
    - Vocabulary: AWL self study starter pack
    - Common writing errors worksheets
    - Self study guides

How can I look for resources?

You can either search for a resource on the shelves in the SAC or the UNNC Online Catalogue (UNNCLOC - http://220.191.168.27/F) to request for a loan if it is not found on the shelf. Below is an example of a result for a book on the UNNCLOC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Main Library Room 308 PE1128.B2.P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The last letter(s) shows the SAC classmark extension. In this example, P shows that this book is in the ‘Pronunciation’ category.

The SAC classmark extensions – use them to find a book

The classmark of a book is found on its spine. The classmark for the book ‘Tree or three?’ in the example above is PE1128.B2.P. If you found this book on the UNNCLOC, use the classmark to help you locate it. Go to the SAC and look for the shelf labelled with the SAC extension ‘P’ for pronunciation. The books are arranged in an alphabetical order following the author code. Thus, find the book by looking at the books in the range of author code B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last two parts of the classmark</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example from above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The last letter(s)</td>
<td>The SAC classmark extension showing the category of the book (e.g. P for Pronunciation)</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The letter and number before the above</td>
<td>Author code (e.g. B2 for Baker, Ann)</td>
<td>B2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The print resources in the SAC are shelved according to the following classmark extensions which denote which category they belong to. Some resources have accompanying materials such as a teacher’s book, an answer key booklet, a CD or a CD-ROM. CDs and CD-ROMs are available from the circulation desk at level 2 of the library. Note that some resources have a companion website that provides an online answer guide and additional online activities. This information is usually found on the back cover, title page, introduction or the ‘guide for teachers/students’ page.

### The SAC Classmark Extensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSMARK EXTENSION</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Includes the following</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>WRITING</td>
<td>Editing and proofreading, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Reference manuals and research methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>IT skills (eg Excel Handbook), critical thinking, Exam Preparation and general EAP (English for Academic Purposes) books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RW</td>
<td>Integrated Writing &amp; Reading</td>
<td>Critical reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>READING SKILLS</td>
<td>Timed reading, reading for fluency and speed reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Reading Resources (Fiction)</td>
<td>Graded readers, easy-reads and abridged versions of novels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNF</td>
<td>Reading Resources (Non-Fiction)</td>
<td>Non-fiction reading resources such as Bluffer’s Guides and Factfiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>LISTENING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS</td>
<td>Integrated Listening &amp; Speaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>SPEAKING</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Pronunciation dictionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Business or technical presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHS</td>
<td>ESP: Arts, Humanities, Social Science</td>
<td>English for Business, tourism, law and finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>ESP: Applied Sciences, IT, Engineering, SD</td>
<td>English for medical science, engineering, sustainable development, IT and architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>CAREERS</td>
<td>Job applications, careers guidance, job interviews and writing CVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE</td>
<td>GENERAL ENGLISH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>TEST PRACTICE</td>
<td>IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, BEC, SAT and Business English tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>GRAMMAR</td>
<td>Grammar practice and reference materials such as grammar dictionaries, ‘Business Grammar and Practice’ and ‘Collins Cobuild Active English Grammar’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>VOCABULARY</td>
<td>General and academic vocabulary, collocations, metaphors, idioms, ESP vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Dictionaries/Thesauruses</td>
<td>ESP dictionaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Activities for students in the SAC

SAC activities are organized to train students to develop language and study skills independently. The SAC advertised these through e-mail and its notice board and details on how students can participate will be provided.
Rules

The CD players and PCs in the SAC are **strictly for language learning use only**. You will be asked to give your place up if you use these facilities for other purposes.

The Library rules and fines apply to the SAC and will be enforced strictly by the SAC and library staff. Visit the [Library Services](#) web page on Fines for more details.

Contact us

The Self Access Centre welcomes your enquiries, comments and suggestions at sac@nottingham.edu.cn
A Guide to Improving English and Study Skills

‘For the Success of Your Study’ is a useful self study guide to begin with if you are new to tertiary education in an environment that encourages independent learning such as UNNC: [http://www.polyu.edu.hk/learn-to-learn/student/html/pdf/Success.pdf](http://www.polyu.edu.hk/learn-to-learn/student/html/pdf/Success.pdf)

More web links on study skills are listed on the [SAC web page on study skills](#).

### 1. How can I improve my listening?

#### Independently

- Keep a record of what you listen to in the [Self Study Log](#) (available for download from the U drive). Write down what you listened to, for how long, what you learnt, what you couldn’t understand, cultural/background problems etc.

- Practice listening using the various listening resources in the SAC. Look for them on shelves with the classmark extensions ‘L’ for Listening and ‘LS’ for Listening and Speaking. There are also some test practice materials for listening in the ‘T’ (Tests) section. In addition, you can listen to subject specific topics in AHS and SC sections. If you prefer listening rather than reading stories, some graded readers have accompanying audio materials.

#### Media

- Use EASE (a programme for practising listening to lectures) in computer labs in the Administration Building, Teaching Building, Student Services Building and the Self-Access Centre (AB 308).

- Work through the ‘Online Listening’ module on WebCT.

- Watch/Listen to the news every day. Prepare to watch/listen to news by reading main headlines online and a vocabulary overview first. You could note important points as you listen/watch. After listening, you can check the important points as you read the news online. News websites you can refer to are:
  - [http://english.cri.cn/](http://english.cri.cn/)
  - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/)
  - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newse english/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newse english/)
  - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/)
  - [http://www.guardian.co.uk/audio](http://www.guardian.co.uk/audio) - News, sports, culture from the Guardian
http://literacyworks.org/learningresources/ - Each module contains the full text of each story (from CNN) and interactive activities to test comprehension. You can choose to listen to the text, view a short video clip or read the text.

- Watch a film in English and talk about it in English with a friend.
- Other online resources you can listen and watch programmes on the SAC listening web links.

2. How can I improve my speaking?

With a partner

- Record presentations and give each other comments to improve on areas to improve.
- Practise an interview for a future job or department.
- Find a speaking partner and set a regular time e.g. 10 minutes 3 times a week, to discuss a topic covered in class, in English. Record time spent and topics on the Self Study Log.
- You can agree an ‘English only’ time (e.g. from 6 pm to 9 pm) in your dormitory every evening or set 3 or 4 ‘English only’ days during the week when everyone in your dormitory speaks English to each other.
- Take part in the Learning Buddies Initiative and find a learning buddy to practise speaking with.
- Some useful web links on speaking are provided on the SAC website.

Independently

- Talk to yourself, when you are alone e.g. give a commentary when you are getting ready for bed, describe what you can see when you’re out for a walk.
- Record your journal orally. You can keep a record of your daily activities and events. You can even upload parts of your journal on your weblog if you have one.
- Speaking web links on VSAC - http://vsac.cele.nottingham.ac.uk/speaking/

Pronunciation practice

- Practise in front of a mirror.
• Notice and practise stress patterns of new words.

• Identify a problem and watch how others shape their mouths for that sound. Focus on using the correct lip, tongue and mouth position.

• Practise a particular sound/aspect and record yourself reading, focussing on getting that particular sound correct.

• Look at http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/multimedia/pron/, http://www.bbc.co.uk/china/learningenglish/pronunciationtips/ or http://www.fonetiks.org/. These websites provide some pronunciation tips and practice in addition to links on http://vsac.cele.nottingham.ac.uk/pronunciation/.

• Learn some English songs and sing them. Find lyrics on the internet.

3. How can I improve my writing?

With friends

• Choose a topic and write a few sentences/a few paragraphs about it. Together correct/reformulate/improve.

• Read your own written work aloud and then edit with others’ help.

• Write a review in English of a book you have enjoyed (this could be a Chinese novel) and show it to a friend.

• Swap your written work. Proofread and edit each other’s writing.

Independently

• Do a self-dictation. Record yourself reading a paragraph from a book, once at normal speed, once more slowly. Playback and write down. Check with text. Do this regularly.

• Copy a text, omitting punctuation. Some days later, repunctuate. Check with original.

• Keep a journal of life at The University of Nottingham, Ningbo China.

• Refer to writing links on the SAC website eg http://vsac.cele.nottingham.ac.uk/writing/ and http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/index2.html.

• Start your own weblog in English.
• Take part in online discussion forums in English.

• Work through the Common Errors in Writing worksheets and check your answers with the key provided. These materials are written for UNNC students based on common errors found in Year 1 undergraduate students’ writing.

• Postgraduate students preparing for dissertation writing might find the SAC web links on research skills useful.

4. How can I improve my reading?

General

• Read a newspaper article; give an oral or written summary to another student. (A range of British/American/international newspapers are available in the library.)

• Read magazines. (Several magazines such as the Economist are available in the library.)

• Practise the skill of predicting. Read the title and sub-headings in the text. Cover text with a card. Write down what main points you think the text might cover. Then read the text to check if your prediction is correct.

• The internet as a reading resource: http://www.guardian.co.uk/ and http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/ (online newspapers) and a list of online reading resources is available at http://www.lextutor.ca/bookbox/#top.

• The SAC has a wide range of fiction and non-fiction resources such as graded readers, Bluffer’s Guides, Factfiles and abridged novels. These are available on general loans. Some resources have an accompanying audio CD or CD-ROM with activities, which you can borrow from the library circulation desk. Some graded readers have activity sheets you can download from the publishers’ website such as Macmillan (you need to register to access the free self-study materials) and Penguin. Some of these can be found in Graded Readers subfolder (in the SAC folder) on the U drive. There is also a range of books for improving reading skills such as critical reading and timed reading.

• You can keep a personal reading record to keep track of your reading and vocabulary progress. A sample of a personal reading record can be downloaded from the Self Study Worksheets section on the Macmillan Readers student site.

• The SAC website’s reading section has reading links to a variety of topics.

Academic

• Find a magazine linked to your specialist subject. Talk about the article and share your magazine with friends.
Find a website related to your subject area.

Read special interest sections in newspapers e.g. business or financial section or articles on your country.

Library resources which can be searched through the UNNC Library Resources web page: http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/content.php?d=147&changelang=en.

**5. How can I improve my vocabulary?**

- Select new and useful vocabulary and record it e.g. put it into your vocabulary notebook or a flash card, or create a vocabulary section/glossary in your notes. Activate your vocabulary by using it regularly in both your speech and writing.

- Review the Academic Word List (AWL). You can do this on your own or with friends. Try looking for learning buddies who want to improve their vocabulary through the Learning Buddies Initiative. With a few students, you can use the AWL self study starter pack to practise and improve AWL vocabulary in a fun way together. More information about the AWL and useful tips on learning the lists can be found at http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/learning.htm. Try out the AWL tools – AWL Highlighter and AWL Gapmaker. Another useful website has a dictionary as well as a pronunciation guide (you need to download a software programme before you can use it): http://www.lextutor.ca/list_learn/eng/. You can select the AWL list from the top left panel.

- Get a good English-English dictionary and learn to use it fully. You should also consider investing in an English-English dictionary that comes with a CD-ROM containing extra practice materials, audio pronunciation you can listen to and a record function so you can listen to your own pronunciation and compare.

- Watch a video on using an online dictionary and a web concordance: http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/Audio-visual/Videomail/videomail7.wmv

- Study text, newspaper/magazine/journal article. Select 5-10 new useful words. Use in own sentences.

- Review a topic covered in class. Tell another student about it, using newly learnt vocabulary.

- Do regular vocabulary study e.g. 15 minutes every day. Select and make a note of new vocabulary met in class/self-study. Review each day’s vocabulary several times. Use SAC vocabulary resources (general, academic or specific purposes) or vocabulary web links from the [SAC website].

- Use your vocabulary notebook to record new information about known words. Add new examples to show how the word is used, new collocations or associated words/ideas.

- Do vocabulary quizzes online e.g. http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes
• Copy (or photocopy) a text studied in class, omitting (or blanking out) new vocabulary items to make a gap fill. Some days later test yourself, then check with the original. Do this with a friend and you could exchange different texts with each other.

• Use your dictionary to look up words you do know, not just new vocabulary in order to learn less obvious collocations for words you commonly use.

• Find out limitations/advantages of electronic dictionaries.

• Read extensively, anything in English, for pleasure. Try to read quickly.

• Use a thesaurus e.g. Oxford Quick Reference Thesaurus to help you find synonyms. In Word, right click on a word for instant synonyms.

• Consider using a collocations dictionary. Oxford Collocations Dictionary is available in the SAC.

• There are some useful vocabulary web links on the SAC vocabulary web page especially the video on using online dictionaries.

• Expand your knowledge and understanding of vocabulary by learning word parts: roots, prefixes and suffixes. There are vocabulary books in the SAC that deal with word parts. E.g. of an online source: http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0907017.html

6. How can I improve my grammar?

• Copy a text, omitting verbs. Write verbs in a list at the bottom. After a day or two, try to fill the gaps. Self check with original text. Try doing this with other parts of speech.

• After your teacher corrects and returns writing, rewrite it taking into account your teacher’s feedback.

• Before handing in any written drafts, work with a learning buddy or a friend to proofread and edit each other’s writing.

• When learning new vocabulary, always note word class in your vocabulary notebook and show how words are used in sentences.

• Explore the grammar web links on the SAC website.

• Go through texts studied in class. Underline verbs. Analyse use of tenses. Note the structure of sentence with certain verbs or noun phrases.

• Make your own gap fill exercises from texts studied in class, or make one to exchange with a friend. Omit verbs but give list of infinitives at bottom. Or omit prepositions. Some days later, complete the text. Check with original. You can do the same with other parts of speech.
The SAC has a range of grammar reference and practice materials. There are also subject specific grammar materials such as Business Grammar.

7. How can I manage the group work process?

- The LearnHigher Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has developed an online learning path to help students manage working together in groups. You could watch a video episode every week and establish some agreed ground rules in your group. Start with the group-work video resource home page, use the links panel on the left to guide you on the order of pages to view and end with ‘Help for students’ as the last page: [http://www.learnhighergroupwork.com/index.php](http://www.learnhighergroupwork.com/index.php).

- There are printed resources in the Study Skills section of the SAC that also deal with the management of group work process. Check the table of contents or the index for ‘group work’ or ‘group project’.