

Get the most from this book

We all need to decide how to revise in a way that works for us, but learning each topic, testing our understanding and knowing how to answer exam questions is essential.

My Functional Skills will help you to do that in a planned way, topic by topic. Use this book in the way that works best for you: write in it, doodle, personalise your notes; and check your progress by ticking off each section as you revise.

Features to help you succeed

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

Focus! Work out which topics you need to spend more time on by answering these **diagnostic questions**. You can choose to focus on areas where you're weaker and spend less time on the topics you're already really good at.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Oh, so that's how I do it! Every topic includes at least one **worked example** that guides you through the steps to answer an exam-style question.

KEY TERMS

What does that mean? On each page all the important key terms are defined; and there's a handy summary of all of these in the glossary at the back of the book.

EXAM TIP

What is the examiner looking for? Throughout the book you'll find **hints and tips** on how to approach answering questions, as well as how you might gain the most marks in the exam.

COMMON MISTAKES

Where did I go wrong? Many of the **common mistakes** and pitfalls students have made in Functional Skills exams are highlighted, so you can avoid making them yourself.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Now it's my turn! Test your understanding of each topic with these short questions.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTIONS

Practice, practice, practice! Get exam-ready by answering these **exam-style questions**. Review the **answers** online at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/functional-skills-english-answers to see whether you have answered correctly or where you went wrong.

Countdown to my exams

6-8 WEEKS TO GO

- **What do I need to revise?** Familiarise yourself with the topics you need to revise. You can use the Revision Planner in this book to help you.
- **What will the exam look like?** Look at the exam board specification or ask your tutor about the format of your Functional Skills exams: when and where will they take place? How long will they last? What types of questions might I see on the exam papers? The assessment breakdown on page 7 gives more information on this.
- **Get organised.** Organise your notes and make sure you've covered all the topics.
- **Make a plan.** Create a revision plan that shows the days and times you'll revise each topic. Be realistic – small, focused sessions of around 40–50 minutes will be more achievable and successful. Make sure you allow yourself breaks. Stick to your plan!

2-6 WEEKS TO GO

- **Make a start.** Use your own revision plan to work through the topics in this book. Look at the explanations, worked examples, key terms, common mistakes and hints and tips. Highlight any important bits and make your own notes in the book if you wish. Tick off each topic when you feel confident, or come back to any topics you think you need to look at again.
- **What do I know?** Now test your understanding by answering the Check Your Understanding questions. Look at the answers online at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/functional-skills-english-answers. What did you get right? Which topics do you need to revisit?
- **Where do I need help?** Speak to your tutor about any topics you're finding tricky. They may be able to go over them again with you as part of a revision class.
- **Get exam ready!** The best way to prepare is to practise answering lots and lots of exam questions. Have a go at the Exam-style Questions in this book and check your answers online at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/functional-skills-english-answers. Look at and attempt past Functional Skills exam papers – you will find these on your exam board's website, or your tutor will be able to share some with you.
- **Keep track.** Use the Revision Planner to keep track of your progress.

1 WEEK TO GO

- Have I covered everything? Check that you have revised every topic on the Revision Planner. Look at any you haven't already now, and revisit any topics you still feel less confident about.
- Prepare for exam conditions. Do a complete past exam paper in timed exam conditions to help you plan your time for the real exams. Compare your answers against the mark scheme or ask your tutor to mark it for you.

THE DAY BEFORE

- **Last-minute check.** Read through your notes and flick through this book to remind yourself of any important points, common mistakes and hints and tips.
- **When and where is it?** Check the time and place of your exam and plan your journey, allowing plenty of time to make sure you're there on time.
- **What do I need to take?** Make sure you have everything you need for the exam – pens, highlighters and water.
- **Relax!** Your revision is complete. Give yourself some time to relax and get an early night to make sure you're ready for the exam tomorrow.

MY FUNCTIONAL SKILLS EXAMS

Speaking, listening and communicating exam

Date:

Time:

Location:

Reading exam

Date:

Time:

Location:

Writing exam

Date:

Time:

Location:

1 Speaking, listening and communicating

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS

When you have answered the following questions, turn to pages 104 to 105 for the correct answers and explanations. You will also find advice and support here to help you identify the chapters you will need to focus on.

- 1 You are listening to a presentation about endangered animals. The presenter mentions all the points below. Tick the boxes for which **three** you think are the most important pieces of information.

How long the presenter expects the presentation to take	
What people are doing that is threatening wild animals' habitats	
Actions people can take to help	
A joke about whether cats or dogs make the best pet	
Examples of animals that are on the endangered list	
The presenter's frustration that her boyfriend does not care about animals	

- 2 The presentation about endangered animals has finished and it is time for questions. Which **two** questions in the list below would be the best ones to ask?

- a Do you think climate change is an issue?
- b In what ways does climate change contribute to this issue?
- c What is your favourite kind of animal?
- d Can we help by donating money to wildlife charities?
- e How are wildlife charities using donations to tackle these problems?

- 3 It is time for you to give your own presentation. Number the following stages of your presentation so they are in the correct logical order.

Stage	Number
Present information and ideas	
Introduce the topic	
Make conclusions/recommendations	
Give your own point of view	

- 4 You are talking about the popularity of streaming videos online. Which piece of evidence would be the most persuasive in supporting each point below? Choose (a) or (b) for each point.

Point	Evidence
Netflix is a popular television streaming service.	<p>a The exact number of users on Netflix.</p> <p>b Your own reasons for watching Netflix.</p>
Streaming will replace old methods of viewing entertainment.	<p>a Examples of films that have been released straight onto streaming services without an initial cinema showing.</p> <p>b A quote from your friend about how much they love the cinema.</p>
It is easy to film a short video and put it online.	<p>a Names of the most popular video bloggers online.</p> <p>b A personal story about making your own video and uploading it to a website in just one day.</p>
Watching online videos is bad for people's attention spans.	<p>a The total number of videos on YouTube.</p> <p>b A quote from an expert about how streaming videos has caused a decline in concentration levels.</p>

- 5 What is the most appropriate response to each situation? Choose (a) or (b) for each situation.

Situation	Response
Someone asks for your opinion on a serious subject during a formal discussion.	<p>a 'Yeah, that's a toughie. Guess I could go either way!'</p> <p>b 'It is a complicated issue. But after consideration, I believe that ...'</p>
The discussion is going off-topic.	<p>a 'Stop! Get back on topic. You're supposed to be talking about endangered animals, remember?'</p> <p>b 'Those are interesting points, but I just want to bring us back to the point Sean made about human impact on nature. I think that ...'</p>
You disagree with someone's opinion during a group discussion.	<p>a 'That's right Sean, but maybe it's slightly not quite right. I'm probably wrong but ...'</p> <p>b 'Actually, I have a different point of view on that. I think ...'</p>
During a group discussion, someone asks you a question you don't know the answer to.	<p>a 'Unfortunately, I don't know the answer. Does anyone else know?'</p> <p>b 'Let me look it up now so I can tell you.'</p>
Everyone looks confused when you use a technical word.	<p>a "'Nocturnal" means the animal is active at night.'</p> <p>b "'Nocturnal" is a behavioural adaptation characterised by night activity.'</p>

1.1 Identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations

REVISED

In your test, you will listen to a presentation, either recorded or from one of your fellow students. You don't need to remember everything you hear, but you should listen carefully for **relevant information** – this means the main points and important details like names, dates, times, directions and instructions.

Relevant information: the important points made, and any information and facts that relate to these.

Following the presentation, there will be a question-and-answer session or informal discussion – this is when you need to show that you have listened well and picked out important information. You can show this by:

- **Asking questions** to find out more information. For example, 'Can you tell us more about what happens to the plastic we put in the recycling bin?'
- **Asking what actions can be taken.** For example, 'What can we do to prevent so much plastic being dumped in the oceans?'
- **Giving your own opinion** on something the speaker said.

COMMON MISTAKE

Try not to be too vague. Here is an example of what works and what does not:

- ✓ ● 'It's disgusting that **such a huge amount of plastic waste ends up in our oceans**. What can we do about it?'
- ✗ ● 'I was disgusted and surprised by what you said. What can we do about that?' This is too vague. It does not mention or respond to any specific points from the presentation.

EXAM TIP

It can be helpful to quickly note down key information while listening to a presentation. Then, when you contribute to the question-and-answer session or discussion that follows, you can glance at your notes to help you remember these specific details.

	5.25 trillion pieces of plastic in oceans
	water bottles biggest problem
	Beach watch helping

WORKED EXAMPLE

Read the transcript on page 31 of a short speech about safety at work. The following comments were part of a discussion about this speech.

'I didn't know that long hair could be dangerous! Is loose clothing bad for the same reason?'

'Do we need to bring anything with us to the meeting on Wednesday?'

- ✓ These comments show that the listener has picked out and understood relevant details from the speech, including two important safety points and an important date.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Ask a friend, family member or colleague to tell you the plot (story) of a recent film, book or video game they enjoyed. Then complete the following task.

- 1 Write one sentence explaining what the film/book/video game was about. For example, was it a love story? Did it involve action or adventure?
- 2 Write down three **details** about the plot. These could be how the story began, where it took place, the names of characters, a big event that happened in it, how it ended, or any other important details.
- 3 Make a comment on one of these details. Your comment could be to give your own opinion about the plot, mention a similar story you enjoyed, ask for more information about a specific part, or anything else.

SAMPLE

1.2 Follow narratives and lines of argument

When listening to a presentation and taking part in the group discussion, you should be able to understand the points the speaker is making, and how these lead to their conclusion or opinion. You should also be able to clearly express your own views and the **reasons** for them.

You can show you have followed a **line of argument** in these ways:

- Saying whether you **agree or disagree with an opinion**. For example: *'I agree that a healthy diet is one important factor, but I think regular exercise is the most important thing.'*
- Giving a **conclusion** to the points the speaker made, to confirm you have understood their message. For example: *'So, if pre-made meals are bad for us, it sounds like we should choose fresh products and cook more from scratch if we want to eat healthily.'*
- Offering an **alternative interpretation** of the points the speaker made. For example: *'But could snacking be the result of not eating good meals that keep people full for long enough, rather than being addicted to sugar?'*

Line of argument:

how the different points someone makes lead to their conclusion or opinion.

COMMON MISTAKE

Your response should not be too vague or general. For example:

'I think we should all follow your advice.' ❌

This only shows general agreement rather than understanding an argument.

EXAM TIP

If you do not fully understand what someone said, don't panic! You can ask them to explain something a bit more. Questions show that you are engaging with the topic, and they can be a good way to encourage more discussion. Just don't ask questions **during** someone else's presentation!

WORKED EXAMPLE

Read the transcript on page 31 of a short speech about safety at work. The following comments were part of a discussion about this speech.

'I thought the managers were just being picky by asking us to tie our hair up, but now I can see that leaving long hair loose is actually a safety issue. I don't want mine caught in a machine!'

'You said we're all responsible for our own safety, but I think the company should also step up by clearly signposting hazard zones in the factory.'

- ✓ The first comment shows that the listener has understood one of the speaker's arguments: why hair should be tied up at work.
- ✓ The second comment shows they understand the speaker's conclusion, even if they do not agree with it, and that they can explain the reason for their own opinion.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Ask a friend, family member or colleague to tell you about their worst holiday, trip, date or day out, and why it was so bad. Then complete the following task.

- 1 Write a sentence that sums up the main reasons they had a bad experience.

- 2 Tell them whether you think you would have had a bad or good time in their place, and why.

- 3 Suggest one thing they could have done differently to make their experience better. Explain why you think this would have helped.

1.3 Respond effectively to detailed or extended questions and feedback

REVISED

You should be able to **clearly answer questions** on your presentation topic, as well as questions asked during the group discussion. You need to listen to the question **carefully** so that you can answer effectively.

You should also be able to **respond to feedback** that is not presented as a question, such as another person's opinion on the topic. For example, you receive the following feedback:

'I don't agree that social media is good at bringing people together. It encourages people to compare themselves with everyone else and compete to be the best.'

A good response would be:

'That's an interesting perspective that I hadn't considered. I agree that a lot of people do try to look successful and glamorous in their posts. But another common message repeated on social media is that you don't need to be perfect to be happy.'

What if I don't know the answer?

Don't panic! If you don't know the answer, it is fine to say so, but try **not** to just say 'I don't know' and leave it there. Here are some things you could do instead:

- Admit this is an area you know less about, but use the knowledge you do have to make an educated guess.
- Ask for more information. For example: *'Unfortunately, I'm not as familiar with that topic. Is it something you could explain more about?'*
- Tell the person who asked the question that you will need to do more research and get back to them later. Remember to thank them for raising an interesting question that gives you more to think about.

COMMON MISTAKE

Do not groan, roll your eyes or look irritated by questions! Instead, you should look interested, smile and nod. **Do not** be dismissive when you answer. Remember, questions show that people have listened to you and are interested in what you have to say, so try to show that you appreciate being asked.

EXAM TIP

When preparing for your presentation and group discussion, think about what questions you are likely to be asked. Make sure you have enough information to answer well. If you are prepared, you will be able to answer with more confidence!

WORKED EXAMPLE

Read the transcript on page 31 of a short speech about safety at work. After this speech, the following question was asked and answered.

Question: 'You mentioned that phones are a distraction. Are there any other things that could distract us and cause safety issues?'

Answer: 'I'm glad you asked! Another big cause of accidents is wearing headphones and listening to music while in the factory, because you won't be paying full attention to what's going on around you. You might not hear someone shouting a warning.'

- ✓ This clearly answers the question (headphones are another distraction) and expands on this to explain why.
- ✓ The words 'I'm glad you asked' show that the question is appreciated and that the speaker is happy to engage with their audience.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Read the transcript on page 31 of a short speech about safety at work. Think about how you would answer the following questions and comments about this speech if you had given it.

If you do not know an answer, think about how you would respond appropriately.

- 1 What about face masks? Shouldn't we wear those?
- 2 I don't agree that hard hats and safety boots are enough protection. We should all wear protective gloves too.
- 3 What are the managers doing to make the factory safer for us?