

Guidelines for INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK

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1. INTRODUCTION

INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK is the name given to a method of adapting foreign-language coursebooks to a Moodle platform. As the name suggests, the activities on the Moodle platform are completed by students as part of their homework. They are essentially e-learning self-study modules¹. The activities are interactive, which means that students get immediate automated feedback as to the success of their homework.

The following is a set of guidelines explaining how to build INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK.

They are based on:

- INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK for *Total English intermediate* (Longman) written for SWPS (Warsaw School of Social Psychology) students in the summer 2006 (authors: Sylvia Maciaszczyk and Adam Maciaszczyk). The project was possible thanks to the huge and ongoing encouragement from Przemysław Stencel (from the SWPS E-learning Centre) without whose expertise the project wouldn't have been realised.
- The results of questionnaires carried out with students working with Interactive Homework intermediate in the academic year 2006/2007 in SWPS.

The guidelines were originally written for authors from Higher College of Business in Bydgoszcz, who used them to build INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK for the following coursebooks: *Intelligent Business Pre-intermediate*, *Intelligent Business Intermediate* and *Intelligent Business Upper-intermediate* (all by Longman).

2. REQUIREMENTS FOR AUTHORS

To write Moodle modules authors need two abilities. Firstly, they need to be able to design good quality ELT materials. Secondly, they need to be able to build the following Moodle Resources and Activities:

1. Resources: a Web page, a link to a file and Link to a Web site, a label.

¹ For the sake of clarity, the term 'module' will be used throughout the guidelines to mean a weekly e-learning, self-study module opened for students after a f2f meeting. Each module should take 90 minutes of students' work time.

2. Activities: a Quiz, a Choice, additionally they may consider using HOT Potatoes Quizzes, Lessons and a Glossary.

3. OVERVIEW

The blended English programme INTERACTIVE HOMEWORK requires students to complete 120 study hours annually, 60 of which are face-to-face meetings with an English teacher while the other 60 are self-study hours delegated to the SWPS e-learning platform. The programme is based on a traditional 120-hour coursebook. In each coursebook unit some activities are reserved for classroom use while others are adapted to the platform. To see which coursebook material is adapted for Moodle activities have a look at sections 4-6. After each face-to-face meeting students have a new e-learning module open, where they can do their 90-minute self-study. The e-learning modules have weekly deadlines. Students know they have only one week to complete each module and that after its deadline a given module becomes inactive, i.e.: students cannot earn credits for it. Each activity on the platform (except for Choices) has points assigned. Students collect the points throughout the semester, as they do for their face-to-face meetings. At the end of the semester, the points are translated into grades.

Each module is built out of Quizzes and Lessons, which offer instant automated feedback. Students are allowed multiple attempts, so that they can come back to a quiz as many times as they want. Thanks to the 'multiple attempts' setting students can score the maximum points in each module.

A note must be made that none of the material from the coursebook is directly copied onto the platform.

4. TYPICAL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA FOR A F2F MEETING

- Introduction of the topic of the Unit
- listening comprehension task(s)
- speaking practice for students (communicative activities in pairs or groups of three, class debates, etc)
- presentation of new grammar or structures (if necessary)
- presentation of new vocabulary (if necessary)
- short writing tasks
- revision of grammar structures and vocabulary from previous meetings and modules
- last but not least, encouragement for students to study at home in the module

To avoid unnecessary repetition and boredom, f2f teachers are offered exact guidelines on what is selected from the coursebook and delegated for self-study to the platform (see Teacher's Guide in point 13 below).

5. TYPICAL STRUCTURE OF AN E-LEARNING MODULE

After a f2f meeting, the teacher opens a new module for students and sends them a message (via the NEWS FORUM in the course) inviting them to visit the platform. On the platform the following kinds of tasks are provided for students:

- **Introduction to a given Module.** The Introduction contains: a list of all tasks, together with the number of points to be scored for each task; the deadline. To build an Introduction choose Add a Resource >> Compose a webpage.
- **Reading comprehension** (in the form of a Quiz). In the introduction to the Quiz students are told to read a specific text in their coursebook and then take the quiz on the platform.
- **Follow-up to the reading** (in the form of a Choice) - an opinion poll related to the topic of the reading: students see the answers of all other students in the course after they have cast their votes.
- **Vocabulary study** (in the form of a Quiz)- presentation and practice of the vocabulary from a particular (part of a) Unit in the book. (please compare Vocabulary List in point 12 below)
- **Grammar presentation** (in the form of a Quiz or a Lesson) - a Lesson is usually much more time-consuming to build than a quiz.
- **Grammar practice** (in the form of a Quiz)
- **Listening Comprehension** (in the form of a Quiz). Students are told to listen to a specific recording from the audio CD attached to their workbook and then come back to the platform and take a comprehension quiz)
- **Hot Potato Quizzes**
- **Links to external websites** where students are offered extra language practice.

Please note that since the Moodle platform has no satisfactory monitoring system to record and store students' work in Hot Potato quizzes or on external websites, both of these are treated as optional activities for students and hence are not considered towards the obligatory 90 minutes of student work in a module.

6. A suggestion for Unit adaptation on the basis of Unit 1: Alliances (*Intelligent Business upper-intermediate*):

Face-to-face meeting 1 (90 minutes of class time):

- Introduction of the topic of alliances (Keynotes p.7, Preview and Listening 1 p. 8)
- Building relationships p 13 **AND / OR** activities from Skills Book **AND/ OR** Workbook **AND / OR** vocabulary presentation p.10 (please note that vocabulary exercises on p 10 are written as follow-up to the Reading. Since students will NOT have read the text on f2f meeting 1, these vocabulary exercises need to be slightly adapted by f2f T in order to be used as vocabulary presentation and not follow-up to the reading).

Module 1 (90 minutes of student self-study):

- Reading p. 9 + Reading comprehension Quiz (care must be taken to ensure that questions in the quiz are different from those in the coursebook)
- Vocabulary Quiz (presentation and practice of vocabulary from the reading).
- Vocabulary Quiz (practice of vocabulary from f2f meeting)

Face-to-face meeting 2 (90 minutes of class time):

- Grammar presentation and practice p.11
- Listening and speaking p.12 **AND / OR** Dilemma and decision p.14

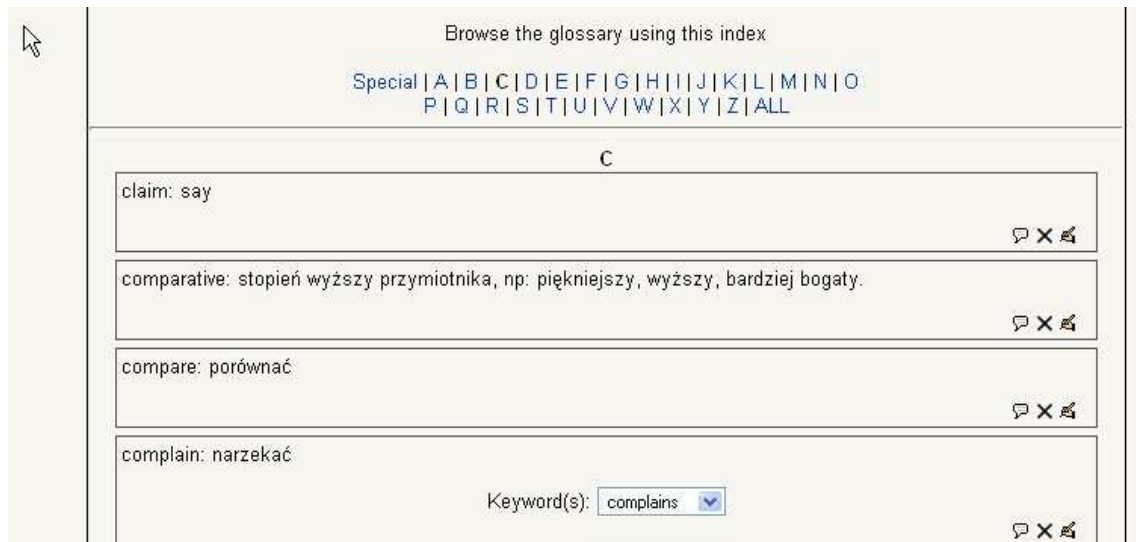
Module 2 (90 minutes of student self-study):

- Grammar Quiz (to practice the grammar presented on the f2f meeting 2)
- Listening comprehension quiz (Listening from p 6 in the workbook). Please remember that the quiz questions need to be different from those in the workbook.
- Reading Comprehension Quiz (to accompany the Reading on page 5 in the workbook). Please inform students in the instructions to the quiz that here they will have to do the Reading task from workbook and check it with the key at the end of the coursebook. Once they see the text in its entirety they can proceed to take the Reading comprehension quiz on the platform. The quiz on the platform in this case may be short but it must be there. Without it, we could never be sure that students have actually read the text.

7. GLOSSARY ‘The language of instructions’.

Authors may decide to use a Glossary (with auto-linking activated) to help students understand their instructions. The Glossary is put in Module 0. When writing instructions you may decide that a given word might stop students from understanding what the whole instructions mean. In a classroom situation there is always the teacher to explain and clarify. Such a role can be filled with the Glossary on the platform.

Below is a page from the Glossary 'The language of instructions' from Interactive Homework for *Total English intermediate*..



Browse the glossary using this index

Special | [A](#) | [B](#) | [C](#) | [D](#) | [E](#) | [F](#) | [G](#) | [H](#) | [I](#) | [J](#) | [K](#) | [L](#) | [M](#) | [N](#) | [O](#)
[P](#) | [Q](#) | [R](#) | [S](#) | [T](#) | [U](#) | [V](#) | [W](#) | [X](#) | [Y](#) | [Z](#) | [ALL](#)

C

claim: say

comparative: stopień wyższy przymiotnika, np: piękniejszy, wyższy, bardziej bogaty.

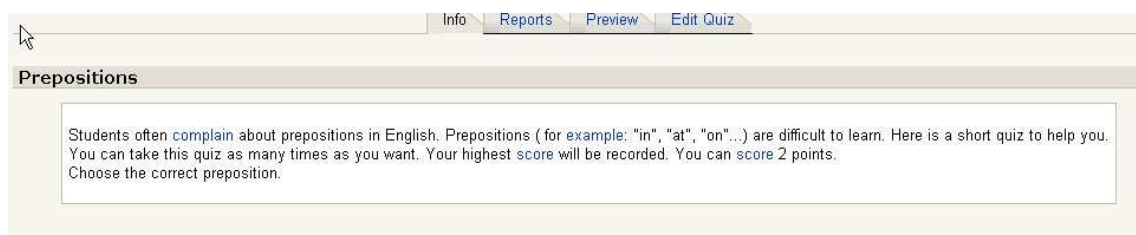
compare: porównać

complain: narzekać

Keyword(s):

Please note that it is often necessary to complete the Keyword(s), as in the entry 'complain' above.

Below are instructions for a Quiz. The words in blue (for example 'complain') are entries in the Glossary. Students can click on them and instantly see the definition/ explanation.



Info Reports Preview Edit Quiz

Prepositions

Students often [complain](#) about prepositions in English. Prepositions (for example: "in", "at", "on"...) are difficult to learn. Here is a short quiz to help you. You can take this quiz as many times as you want. Your highest score will be recorded. You can score 2 points. Choose the correct preposition.

After clicking on 'complain' students see the following:



[Learning](#) » [K4semi](#) » [Glossaries](#) » [Search](#)

complain: narzekać

» [The language of instructions.](#)

8. LESSON

Authors may decide to use a Lesson for grammar presentation. Alternatively, a Quiz may be used for that purpose.

9. MODULE 0

Module 0 is an administrative module where students do not practice English yet but they learn about the course. It contains the following:

- Introduction to the course (in the form of a Resource – a Webpage). This document explains to students what the course is about, how it is divided and how students should work in it. It also contains information about the materials students must have to do their work (coursebook, workbook, skills book) and the number of points students can score in a given semester.
- A link to an online dictionary
- A News Forum (so that the f2f teacher can send messages to his / her students)
- A glossary: The Language of Instructions (if used).

10. REVISION MODULES

There are two Revision Modules each semester. Revision Module 1 is a module half-way through the semester and it allows students to practice towards the midterm test whereas Revision Module 2 is the last module in the semester. These modules contain all the quizzes from preceding modules. Students don't get points for the quizzes in the Revision module.

11. VOCABULARY LIST

Vocabulary List is included in the last module on the platform (invisible to students). To build it choose Add a resource >> Compose a web page. It is a list of vocabulary / collocations taught and practised in Moodle quizzes. The list will help f2f teachers design valid tests of vocabulary (ie progress tests to be administered in the classroom). Additionally, f2f teachers might decide to show the VL to students. The list shows the vocabulary divided into sections in the order which corresponds to the order of modules or coursebook Units, as in the example below - the example is taken from the Vocabulary List in Interactive Homework for *Total English Intermediate*:



Module 7

TOP CITIES:

1. a guide book
2. a survey
3. to conduct (a survey)
4. environment
5. suffer from
6. crime rate
7. traffic
8. healthcare
9. avoid
10. to judge

CITY OR COUNTRY? - FILM

1. easy access to
2. good location
3. appeal (verb) to a student
4. adjust (verb) to country life
5. wildlife
6. a (music) venue
7. pace (noun) of life
8. to take advantage of sth
9. an advantage
10. a disadvantage

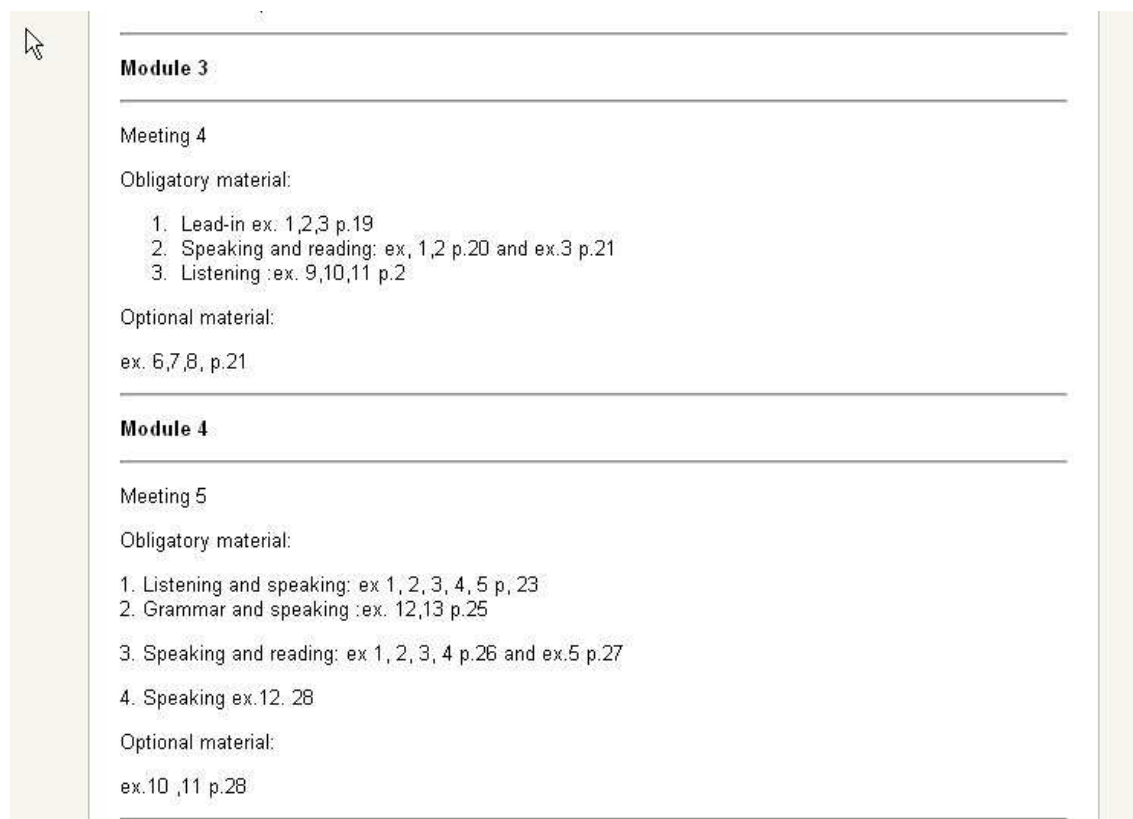
Please note that each module should explicitly teach and practice at least 20 vocabulary items. When deciding on the vocabulary scope to be taught in a module, authors are encouraged to consider the following:

- Vocabulary explicitly taught in the coursebook and workbook
- Glossary at the end of the coursebook (in the Intelligent Business series)
- Vocabulary from reading (authors are advised to look at each Reading and decide which lexical items will hamper comprehension of the text and then teach / pre-teach those items in a vocabulary quiz).

12. TEACHER'S GUIDE

The Teacher's Guide is included in the last module on the platform (invisible to students). It is divided into 15 f2f meetings (in a semester), it tells the f2f teacher what material should be

covered during each f2f meeting. The following example comes from T's guide to TE intermediate:



The screenshot shows a digital document with a mouse cursor in the top left corner. It is divided into two sections by horizontal lines. The first section is titled "Module 3" and contains "Meeting 4". Under "Obligatory material:", there is a numbered list: 1. Lead-in ex. 1,2,3 p.19; 2. Speaking and reading: ex. 1,2 p.20 and ex.3 p.21; 3. Listening :ex. 9,10,11 p.2. Below this is "Optional material:" with "ex. 6,7,8, p.21". The second section is titled "Module 4" and contains "Meeting 5". Under "Obligatory material:", there is a numbered list: 1. Listening and speaking: ex 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 p, 23; 2. Grammar and speaking :ex. 12,13 p.25; 3. Speaking and reading: ex 1, 2, 3, 4 p.26 and ex.5 p.27; 4. Speaking ex.12. 28. Below this is "Optional material:" with "ex.10 ,11 p.28".

13. GUIDELINES FOR SETTINGS IN QUIZZES

The Introduction to a quiz should contain information about the aim of the quiz and the number of points to be scored. An encouraging welcome, or a warm-up, is also recommended. The following is an example of Quiz instruction from TE intermediate Interactive Homework:



The screenshot shows a web-based quiz interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: "Informacja", "Raporty", "Podgląd", and "Edytuj pytania". The main content area is titled "Best friends - DVD". The text reads: "Do you like films? Who doesn't?!! Well, you are going to watch two episodes from two very different films. The episodes are called "Best Friends" and they are on the DVD at the end of your book. Watch the films and take this quiz to check how well you understood the situations in the films. Don't worry if you can't answer the questions in the quiz after watching the film once. You can watch the film again 😊 You can take this quiz as many times as you want. Your highest score will be recorded. You can score 3 points max." At the bottom, it says "Quiz jest dostępny do: czwartek, 30 sierpień 2007, 15:00" and "Przeglądaj 31 ukończonych quizów (14 Studenci)".

Please keep the following settings:

- Time Limit: none (the results of the questionnaires show that students get annoyed with the timer, which is considered unfriendly)
- Shuffle questions: YES (unless you use “description” as a question type!! ²)
- Shuffle answers: YES
- Attempts allowed: unlimited attempts
- Grading method: highest grade (unless a particular quiz is part of a Revision Module where students score no points)
- Students may review:

Responses, scores and feedback – Always;

Answers: After the quiz is closed (showing students correct answers before the quiz is closed would discourage the students themselves from searching for a correct answer)

² WARNING: If you use the question type of “description” in a quiz (very helpful if you want to present instructions in a student-friendly manner as in picture 1 below) do NOT SHUFFLE questions!! Shuffling questions in that quiz would mean that the instructions can appear in any place in the quiz, for example between the questions.

Picture 1:

Instruction within the quiz presented in the form of a question type “description”:

The screenshot shows a quiz interface with a yellow background. At the top, there is a text box containing instructions: "Fill in the sentences with the Past Simple forms of the verbs from the list. prevent, improve, contribute, increase, achieve, vary, encounter." Below this, there are three numbered questions, each with a "Marks: 1" label and an "Answer:" text box. Question 4: "We didn't know that building a house would mean so much trouble. When we started to build our little house, we a difficulty every day or so. It was a nightmare!" Question 5: "Beacuse of the global warming phenomenon average temperatures all around the world last year by at least 1 degree. That is very dangerous." Question 6: "Studying conditions in our school a lot last year: there was a new canteen opened, there appeared more chairs and tables in the corridors, the library was extended and more books were purchased." Each question has a corresponding empty text box for the answer.

- Group mode – no groups
- Visible to students – show
- Advanced settings – ignore.

14. GUIDELINES FOR SETTINGS IN CHOICES

Publish results: Show results to students after they answer

Privacy of results: Publish full results, showing names and their choices

Allow choice to be updated: YES

Show column for unanswered: YES

Group mode: NO GROUPS

Visible to students: SHOW

The above settings allow students to see the opinion / answers of other students which makes the modules more ‘social’ and more inviting for students to participate (even though they do NOT get points for Choices, as Moodle doesn’t allow that).

15. CONCLUSION

There are a few strengths of the Interactive Homework programme worth noting. Firstly, the traditional 60-hour course is easily extended into 120 tuition hours. That allows students to get extra English practice. Although the self-study Moodle activities are completed at home, students’ achievement is fully monitored by the teacher. Secondly, students become more involved and better motivated to learn thanks to the technology used. The weekly Moodle deadlines impose good discipline and ensure regular revision. Moreover, students who are ill, or for other reasons absent, can still follow at least part of the course from home. All these factors contribute to better job satisfaction for teachers too.