

ADVANCED ENGLISH

C1-C2 Advanced Grammar Mastery Guide

Complex clauses, focus, stance, reference, reduction, and elegant control

C1

Flexible, precise, well-structured language for demanding social, academic, and professional situations.

C2

Fine-grained control of nuance, register, implication, style, and reformulation with very little strain.

Your target

Use advanced grammar to package meaning, manage focus, qualify claims, and maintain cohesion - while knowing when a simpler structure is stronger.

Inside this guide

15 advanced grammar units, clause-pattern contrasts, error traps, production tasks, a 30-day practice path, grammar editing checklist, and final assessment.

Important accuracy note

CEFR levels describe communicative ability. They do not publish one mandatory list of punctuation rules, vocabulary items, grammar points, or idioms for C1 and C2. This guide is a practical, CEFR-aligned progression designed for advanced learners.

American English conventions are used as the default. Recognized international and British variants are noted where they materially affect meaning or style.

How to Use This Guide

Advanced progress is less about collecting more rules and more about making better choices under pressure. Work actively: notice the option, explain the effect, produce your own version, then revise it.

Step	What to do
1. Recognize	Identify the structure and its discourse purpose.
2. Contrast	Compare it with a simpler or alternative form.
3. Transform	Rewrite while preserving core meaning.
4. Produce	Use the form in context, not isolation.
5. Edit	Check accuracy, register, and cognitive load.

C1 evidence

You can choose an effective form for a demanding task, sustain control across a longer response, and repair awkward wording without losing the thread.

C2 evidence

You can deliberately manipulate nuance, rhythm, register, emphasis, and implication, and can reformulate almost immediately when the first wording is not exact.

Recommended rhythm

- Study one unit every two days.
- Day A: notice, analyze, and imitate.
- Day B: retrieve, produce, and edit without looking.
- Recycle older units after 3, 7, and 14 days.

The advanced learner's trap

Knowing that an expression is grammatically possible is not enough. At C1-C2, the questions become: Is it natural here? Is it the right register? Does it imply what I intend? Is there a more precise or more economical way to say it?

C1-C2 Advanced Grammar Mastery Guide - Skill Map

The sequence moves from reliable advanced control to deliberate stylistic control. A learner may meet any feature earlier; the distinction here is the depth, flexibility, and consistency of use.

#	Unit	C1 focus	C2 extension
1	Clause combining and information density	Combine clauses flexibly while keeping relationships explicit.	Compress or expand information to control pace and emphasis.
2	Inversion for emphasis and condition	Use common negative and conditional inversion accurately.	Use inversion selectively for formal emphasis without sounding theatrical.
3	Cleft sentences and focus	Use it-clefts and wh-clefts to control information focus.	Use clefts to correct assumptions, contrast alternatives, and stage emphasis.
4	Fronting and marked word order	Use fronting for topic management and controlled emphasis.	Manipulate marked order without creating literary or unnatural prose.
5	Participle and reduced clauses	Use -ing, -ed, and perfect participle clauses accurately.	Compress background information while preserving clear reference and time relations.
6	Advanced relative clauses	Use preposition + relative pronoun, sentential relatives, and reduced relatives.	Choose relative structures according to formality, density, and rhythm.
7	Noun clauses and stance	Use that-clauses, wh-clauses, and extraposition to express complex propositions.	Shape stance by choosing subjects such as it, what, the fact that, or a reporting noun.
8	Conditionals beyond the textbook four	Use mixed, implied, and alternative conditional structures.	Express counterfactuality, contingency, concession, and remote possibility precisely.
9	Subjunctive and mandative structures	Recognize and use common formal subjunctive patterns.	Choose among subjunctive, should, and ordinary indicative variants according to dialect and register.
10	Determiners and reference at advanced level	Control generic, specific, institutional, and zero-article reference.	Use determiner choice to manage shared knowledge and conceptual framing.
11	Advanced comparison and gradability	Use complex comparison, proportion, and degree structures.	Express subtle scalar relationships with precision and economy.
12	Prepositions in abstract relationships	Control high-frequency abstract preposition patterns.	Use prepositional phrases flexibly while recognizing fixed lexical patterns.
13	Ellipsis and substitution	Use do so, so/not, one/ones, auxiliary ellipsis, and omitted repeated material.	Reduce repetition without creating ambiguity or excessive formality.
14	Grammar of stance and evidentiality	Use modal verbs, adverbs, reporting structures, and lexical verbs to mark source and certainty.	Layer stance so readers can distinguish evidence, inference, hearsay, and judgment.
15	Editing for complexity, not complication	Maintain accuracy while varying structure across a sustained text.	Simplify strategically and use complexity only where it adds precision or cohesion.

Clause combining and information density

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Combine clauses flexibly while keeping relationships explicit.

C2 EXTENSION

Compress or expand information to control pace and emphasis.

Core idea

Advanced grammar is not longer grammar; it is controlled packaging of information.

Notice the effect

Although the evidence is limited, the pattern is consistent.

Limited though the evidence is, the pattern is consistent.

The evidence is limited; nevertheless, the pattern is consistent.

Practice

1. Rewrite one idea in three clause structures.
2. Identify which relationship is foregrounded in each version.
3. Reduce one overlong sentence without losing nuance.

Production challenge

Explain a complex issue in 150 words using at least four different clause-linking strategies.

Watch for this

Avoid stacking subordinate clauses until the main point becomes hard to locate.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Inversion for emphasis and condition

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use common negative and conditional inversion accurately.

C2 EXTENSION

Use inversion selectively for formal emphasis without sounding theatrical.

Core idea

Inversion changes word order after certain fronted negatives and in formal conditional structures.

Notice the effect

Rarely have I seen such a rapid change.

Had we known earlier, we would have responded differently.

Only after the review did the problem become clear.

Practice

1. Convert a standard conditional into an inverted form.
2. Repair two incorrect inversion examples.
3. Explain the register difference between inverted and ordinary forms.

Production challenge

Write a formal reflection using two inversions that genuinely support emphasis.

Watch for this

Do not use inversion repeatedly in ordinary conversation simply because it looks advanced.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Cleft sentences and focus

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use it-clefts and wh-clefts to control information focus.

C2 EXTENSION

Use clefts to correct assumptions, contrast alternatives, and stage emphasis.

Core idea

Cleft structures split one proposition so that a particular element receives focus.

Notice the effect

It was timing that caused the failure.

What we need is a clearer process.

The person who raised the issue was Nadia.

Practice

1. Turn three neutral sentences into clefts.
2. Identify the focused element in each example.
3. Choose whether a cleft or a simple sentence is more natural in context.

Production challenge

Give a 60-second explanation that uses one cleft to correct a misunderstanding.

Watch for this

Clefts become heavy if used too often; focus can also come from stress or sentence order.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Fronting and marked word order

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use fronting for topic management and controlled emphasis.

C2 EXTENSION

Manipulate marked order without creating literary or unnatural prose.

Core idea

English allows selected elements to move to the front when discourse purpose justifies it.

Notice the effect

This point, I completely agree with.

More important is the question of access.

Into the room walked the director.

Practice

1. Label each example as conversational, formal, or literary in tone.
2. Rewrite marked order into neutral order.
3. Create one fronted sentence that improves a transition.

Production challenge

Open three consecutive paragraphs with different but natural topic-management strategies.

Watch for this

Marked word order is powerful precisely because it is not the default.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Participle and reduced clauses

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use -ing, -ed, and perfect participle clauses accurately.

C2 EXTENSION

Compress background information while preserving clear reference and time relations.

Core idea

Reduced clauses can make writing economical, but the understood subject must be clear.

Notice the effect

Having reviewed the data, we changed the plan.

Designed for remote use, the system requires little setup.

Working from home, she noticed fewer interruptions.

Practice

1. Expand each reduced clause into a full clause.
2. Check the understood subject for possible dangling modifiers.
3. Combine two sentences using a participle clause.

Production challenge

Edit a 180-word report to reduce two repetitive subordinate clauses safely.

Watch for this

Avoid dangling participles such as 'Driving to work, the rain started.'

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Advanced relative clauses

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use preposition + relative pronoun, sentential relatives, and reduced relatives.

C2 EXTENSION

Choose relative structures according to formality, density, and rhythm.

Core idea

Relative clauses can identify, elaborate, or comment on an entire preceding idea.

Notice the effect

The framework within which we operate is changing.

The deadline was extended, which relieved the team.

Applicants selected for interview will be contacted.

Practice

1. Rewrite a stranded preposition into a formal preposition-fronted form.
2. Explain what 'which' refers to in a sentential relative.
3. Reduce a relative clause where meaning remains clear.

Production challenge

Write a formal paragraph with three different relative-clause patterns.

Watch for this

Preposition-fronting can sound stiff in conversation; choose according to register.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Noun clauses and stance

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use that-clauses, wh-clauses, and extraposition to express complex propositions.

C2 EXTENSION

Shape stance by choosing subjects such as it, what, the fact that, or a reporting noun.

Core idea

The same proposition can be framed as a fact, assumption, question, concern, or possibility.

Notice the effect

It is unclear whether the change will last.

What remains unclear is whether the change will last.

The possibility that the change may not last deserves attention.

Practice

1. Reframe one proposition in three stance patterns.
2. Identify which version sounds most cautious.
3. Use a noun clause after a reporting verb, adjective, and noun.

Production challenge

Write a 150-word analysis that distinguishes known facts, open questions, and assumptions grammatically.

Watch for this

Grammar can imply certainty. Do not present an assumption in a fact-like structure without evidence.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Conditionals beyond the textbook four

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use mixed, implied, and alternative conditional structures.

C2 EXTENSION

Express counterfactuality, contingency, concession, and remote possibility precisely.

Core idea

Real communication often omits if or mixes time reference when the logic requires it.

Notice the effect

Without your help, we would have missed the deadline.

If I were more organized, I would have finished yesterday.

Assuming the figures are correct, the plan is viable.

Practice

1. Identify time reference in each clause.
2. Rewrite an if-clause using without, provided, assuming, or otherwise.
3. Create one mixed conditional from a real-life situation.

Production challenge

Explain three alternative scenarios using three different conditional frames.

Watch for this

Do not choose a mixed conditional because it looks advanced; the time logic must justify it.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Subjunctive and mandative structures

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Recognize and use common formal subjunctive patterns.

C2 EXTENSION

Choose among subjunctive, should, and ordinary indicative variants according to dialect and register.

Core idea

Mandative structures occur after recommendations, demands, and importance expressions.

Notice the effect

They recommended that he be appointed.

It is essential that every applicant submit the form.

They suggested that she should apply.

Practice

1. Transform three recommendations into mandative structures.
2. Compare American and British variants.
3. Identify contexts where an infinitive would be simpler.

Production challenge

Write a short policy recommendation using three different mandative patterns.

Watch for this

The subjunctive is not automatically superior; many contexts favor simpler alternatives.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Determiners and reference at advanced level

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Control generic, specific, institutional, and zero-article reference.

C2 EXTENSION

Use determiner choice to manage shared knowledge and conceptual framing.

Core idea

Article errors can persist at advanced levels because reference depends on what the speaker assumes the listener can identify.

Notice the effect

Education is changing.

The education offered by the program is changing.

She went to school. / She went to the school.

Practice

1. Explain the reference difference in each pair.
2. Edit article use in a paragraph about institutions.
3. Create examples of generic singular, generic plural, and mass-noun reference.

Production challenge

Give a two-minute explanation of a social issue while monitoring article choices.

Watch for this

Do not apply a one-rule translation from your first language; article choice depends on English reference structure.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Advanced comparison and gradability

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use complex comparison, proportion, and degree structures.

C2 EXTENSION

Express subtle scalar relationships with precision and economy.

Core idea

Comparison includes more than comparative adjectives: it can encode proportional change, limits, and expectations.

Notice the effect

The more we automate, the more important oversight becomes.

The result was no less surprising than the earlier finding.

It is by far the most reliable option available.

Practice

1. Build one correlative comparative sentence.
2. Rewrite a basic 'much better' claim more precisely.
3. Use a limiting phrase such as slightly, substantially, nowhere near, or not nearly.

Production challenge

Compare three options in 150 words without relying repeatedly on better/worse.

Watch for this

Intensifiers must fit the adjective and the evidence; do not overstate small differences.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Prepositions in abstract relationships

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Control high-frequency abstract preposition patterns.

C2 EXTENSION

Use prepositional phrases flexibly while recognizing fixed lexical patterns.

Core idea

At C1-C2, preposition errors often come from collocation rather than from a simple spatial rule.

Notice the effect

with respect to

in light of

at odds with

on the basis of

Practice

1. Group expressions by meaning: basis, contrast, relevance, cause.
2. Repair five preposition errors from advanced writing.
3. Create a substitution set around one noun or adjective.

Production challenge

Write a formal response using eight advanced prepositional phrases naturally.

Watch for this

Do not insert formal prepositional phrases when a simple preposition is clearer.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Ellipsis and substitution

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use do so, so/not, one/ones, auxiliary ellipsis, and omitted repeated material.

C2 EXTENSION

Reduce repetition without creating ambiguity or excessive formality.

Core idea

Advanced cohesion often depends on what English leaves unsaid because the listener can recover it.

Notice the effect

I expected the plan to work, and it did.

Some supported the change; others did not.

The first option is cheaper than the second one.

Practice

1. Identify the omitted material in each example.
2. Rewrite a repetitive paragraph using ellipsis or substitution.
3. Decide when repetition is clearer than omission.

Production challenge

Speak for 90 seconds comparing two proposals while avoiding unnecessary repetition.

Watch for this

Ellipsis fails when the omitted material has more than one plausible interpretation.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Grammar of stance and evidentiality

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Use modal verbs, adverbs, reporting structures, and lexical verbs to mark source and certainty.

C2 EXTENSION

Layer stance so readers can distinguish evidence, inference, hearsay, and judgment.

Core idea

Advanced grammar helps answer: How do you know? How certain are you? Whose claim is this?

Notice the effect

The change may reflect seasonal variation.

The change appears to reflect seasonal variation.

The report claims that the change reflects seasonal variation.

Practice

1. Label each example by evidence source and certainty.
2. Reframe one strong claim as inference and then as attribution.
3. Combine a reporting verb with a modal without becoming vague.

Production challenge

Analyze a contested claim in 180 words while keeping sources and certainty grammatically explicit.

Watch for this

Avoid hiding responsibility behind vague passive structures such as 'it is believed' when the source matters.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Editing for complexity, not complication

NOTICE

ANALYZE

PRODUCE

REVISE

C1 TARGET

Maintain accuracy while varying structure across a sustained text.

C2 EXTENSION

Simplify strategically and use complexity only where it adds precision or cohesion.

Core idea

C2-like control often appears in elegant simplification: the writer can choose a simple sentence after a complex one because the discourse calls for it.

Notice the effect

Long sentence for qualification; short sentence for conclusion.

Dense noun phrase in a heading; fuller clause in the explanation.

Practice

1. Underline every subordinate clause in a paragraph and check whether each earns its place.
2. Split one overloaded sentence.
3. Combine two choppy sentences where the relationship is obvious.

Production challenge

Edit a 300-word text twice: first for grammatical accuracy, then for rhythm and cognitive load.

Watch for this

Do not equate advanced proficiency with maximum syntactic density.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

30-Day Practice Plan - Days 1-15

Each unit receives two days: first for controlled noticing, then for independent production. Keep a correction log; advanced progress comes from repeated repair of your own recurring patterns.

Day	Focus	Mode	Output
1	Clause combining and information density	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
2	Clause combining and information density	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
3	Inversion for emphasis and condition	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
4	Inversion for emphasis and condition	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
5	Cleft sentences and focus	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
6	Cleft sentences and focus	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
7	Fronting and marked word order	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
8	Fronting and marked word order	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
9	Participle and reduced clauses	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
10	Participle and reduced clauses	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
11	Advanced relative clauses	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
12	Advanced relative clauses	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
13	Noun clauses and stance	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
14	Noun clauses and stance	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
15	Conditionals beyond the textbook four	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.

Retrieval rule

Before opening the guide, write or say what you remember from the previous unit. Retrieval before review is a stronger test than rereading.

30-Day Practice Plan - Days 16-30

Each unit receives two days: first for controlled noticing, then for independent production. Keep a correction log; advanced progress comes from repeated repair of your own recurring patterns.

Day	Focus	Mode	Output
16	Conditionals beyond the textbook four	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
17	Subjunctive and mandative structures	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
18	Subjunctive and mandative structures	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
19	Determiners and reference at advanced level	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
20	Determiners and reference at advanced level	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
21	Advanced comparison and gradability	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
22	Advanced comparison and gradability	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
23	Prepositions in abstract relationships	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
24	Prepositions in abstract relationships	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
25	Ellipsis and substitution	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
26	Ellipsis and substitution	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
27	Grammar of stance and evidentiality	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
28	Grammar of stance and evidentiality	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
29	Editing for complexity, not complication	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
30	Editing for complexity, not complication	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.

Retrieval rule

Before opening the guide, write or say what you remember from the previous unit. Retrieval before review is a stronger test than rereading.

Advanced Quick Reference

Use this page as a fast review before writing, speaking, or editing.

Feature	Advanced question to ask
Clause relationship	What logical relation am I encoding?
Focus	Which element should carry informational emphasis?
Reference	Can the reader identify every pronoun, article, and relative reference?
Reduction	Can I compress this safely, or will the subject become unclear?
Stance	Does the grammar signal fact, inference, attribution, or evaluation?
Register	Is this structure natural in this genre?
Cognitive load	Would a simpler sentence make the reasoning easier to process?
Variation	Am I varying structure purposefully rather than mechanically?

Advanced English is not maximum complexity. It is maximum control.

Final Performance Assessment

This is a learning check, not an official CEFR certification. Use it to identify where your advanced control is stable and where you still depend on conscious effort.

Task A - Prepared

Create a 3-minute spoken response or 300-word text using at least five features from this guide. Revise once.

Task B - Unprepared

Answer a new prompt for 2 minutes or write 180 words in 12 minutes. Then identify three choices you would improve.

Mastery checklist

- I can combine and reduce clauses while keeping logical relationships clear.
- I can use focus structures, inversion, and marked order selectively.
- I can control advanced relatives, noun clauses, determiners, and conditionals.
- I can use grammar to distinguish fact, inference, attribution, and evaluation.
- I can vary sentence architecture across a sustained text.
- I can simplify a grammatically complex sentence when simplicity is stronger.

Dimension	1 - Developing	2 - Reliable C1 control	3 - Flexible C2-like control
Accuracy	Frequent repair is needed.	Errors are occasional and rarely obscure meaning.	Control is sustained even with complex or compressed language.
Choice	Uses a safe default.	Chooses from several effective options.	Chooses deliberately for nuance, tone, rhythm, or implication.
Reformulation	Gets stuck when wording fails.	Repairs effectively after a pause.	Recasts smoothly and precisely with minimal disruption.
Transfer	Uses features only in practiced topics.	Transfers them across familiar advanced contexts.	Transfers them naturally across unfamiliar and high-pressure contexts.

Next step

Do not repeat every unit. Repeat the three units that caused the most hesitation, then retest with a new topic.

Alignment and Further Study

This workbook uses CEFR as a proficiency framework rather than as a checklist of mandatory language items.

- **Council of Europe:** Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Companion Volume (2020).
- **English Profile:** research on grammar, vocabulary, and learner language across CEFR levels.
- **Cambridge English:** C1 Advanced and C2 Proficiency handbooks and sample materials.
- **Corpus-informed dictionaries:** use reputable learner and general dictionaries to verify collocation, register, frequency, pronunciation, and usage labels.
- **Style references:** compare conventions across professional, academic, journalistic, and organizational style guides when punctuation or capitalization varies.

Evidence habit

At C1-C2, dictionary definitions alone are not enough. Check authentic examples, collocations, grammar patterns, register labels, and how a phrase behaves across different contexts.

Digital Nutrients study principle

Notice -> retrieve -> produce -> revise -> transfer. The goal is not to sound complicated. The goal is to express the exact meaning you intend, in language appropriate for the audience and situation.