

ADVANCED ENGLISH

C1-C2 Verbs: Tense, Aspect & Modality

Viewpoint, certainty, voice, causation, reporting, and advanced verb patterns

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

Control the English verb system as a network of choices about time, viewpoint, certainty, responsibility, and event structure.

Inside this guide

15 advanced verb-system units, tense/aspect contrasts, modal force, voice, causatives, reporting patterns, a 30-day plan, and system-level editing practice.

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 They do not publish one mandatory list of punctuation rules, vocabulary items, grammar points, or idioms for C1 and C2.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 Handbook

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. Timeline	Locate the reference time and event time.
2. Viewpoint	Identify what the aspect foregrounds.
3. Stance	Check modality and evidential force.
4. Pattern	Verify complements, objects, and prepositions.
5. System edit	Make choices consistent across the whole paragraph.

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 Verbs: Tense, Aspect & Modality - 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	Perfect aspect: result, experience, and current relevance	Choose present perfect vs. past simple reliably in complex contexts.	Use perfect aspect to manipulate viewpoint and current relevance across discourse.
2	Perfect continuous aspect	Use perfect continuous for duration, repeated activity, and visible results.	Contrast perfect simple and continuous to foreground completion vs. process.
3	Future in the past and projected viewpoint	Use would, was going to, was to, and was about to appropriately.	Shift temporal viewpoint fluidly in narrative and reported planning.
4	Modal scale: possibility, probability, certainty	Use may, might, could, should, must, and related lexical forms accurately.	Calibrate epistemic force and avoid presenting inference as fact.
5	Modal perfects and past evaluation	Use must have, might have, should have, could have, needn't have, and can't have.	Express inference, regret, criticism, unrealized possibility, and unnecessary action precisely.
6	Would: habit, volition, politeness, and hypothetical meaning	Distinguish common uses of would beyond conditionals.	Exploit would for narrative habit, tentative stance, refusal, and future-in-the-past.
7	Passive voice and agent management	Use passive forms flexibly across tenses and modals.	Choose passive, active, or agentless structures according to information flow and responsibility.
8	Get-passives and informal affectedness	Recognize and use common get-passives appropriately.	Use get-passives to express affectedness, change, or eventfulness without confusing them with standard passive style.
9	Causatives: have/get something done and have someone do	Use causative patterns to distinguish arranging a service from causing an action.	Control subtle responsibility and affectedness in formal and conversational contexts.
10	Reporting verbs and complementation	Use verb patterns after advanced reporting verbs accurately.	Choose reporting verbs that encode stance, evidence, agreement, or criticism.
11	Verb patterns with meaning change	Distinguish forms such as remember doing/to do, try doing/to do, stop doing/to do.	Use verb-pattern alternations to express subtle temporal or intentional differences.
12	Aspect with stative and dynamic meanings	Use selected verbs in simple or continuous aspect according to meaning.	Exploit meaning shifts in verbs such as think, have, see, appear, and be.
13	Tense and aspect in narrative sequencing	Control background, foreground, earlier past, and result in extended narratives.	Use tense shifts as viewpoint tools rather than as isolated sentence choices.
14	Verb choice, valency, and argument structure	Use advanced verbs with the complements they license.	Recast sentences when a desired verb has a different argument structure.
15	Editing tense, aspect, and modality as a system	Audit a full text for timeline, viewpoint, certainty, and responsibility.	Make coordinated verb-system choices across paragraphs rather than correcting isolated forms.

Perfect aspect: result, experience, and current relevance

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C1 TARGET

Choose present perfect vs. past simple reliably in complex contexts.

C2 EXTENSION

Use perfect aspect to manipulate viewpoint and current relevance across discourse.

Core idea

Perfect forms connect an earlier situation with a later reference point; the key is viewpoint, not a memorized time word.

Notice the effect

I have reviewed the file, so we can discuss it now.

I reviewed the file yesterday.

By then, I had reviewed the file twice.

Practice

1. Explain the reference point in each example.
2. Rewrite one narrative paragraph to change viewpoint.
3. Contrast current relevance with finished past time.

Production challenge

Tell a 90-second story that moves among past simple, present perfect, and past perfect without losing the timeline.

Watch for this

Do not select the present perfect only because a sentence contains ever, never, already, or yet.

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

Perfect continuous aspect

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C1 TARGET

Use perfect continuous for duration, repeated activity, and visible results.

C2 EXTENSION

Contrast perfect simple and continuous to foreground completion vs. process.

Core idea

The two forms often describe the same period but focus attention differently.

Notice the effect

I have written three reports today.

I have been writing reports all day.

She had been waiting for an hour when the call came.

Practice

1. State what is counted or foregrounded in each example.
2. Create a pair where both forms are possible but the focus changes.
3. Identify stative verbs that resist continuous use.

Production challenge

Explain your recent work or study week using at least four perfect forms with different viewpoints.

Watch for this

Continuous aspect is not simply 'long action'; lexical meaning and speaker viewpoint matter.

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

Future in the past and projected viewpoint

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C1 TARGET

Use would, was going to, was to, and was about to appropriately.

C2 EXTENSION

Shift temporal viewpoint fluidly in narrative and reported planning.

Core idea

English has multiple ways to look forward from a past reference point.

Notice the effect

I knew the meeting would be difficult.

We were going to launch in May, but the plan changed.

The train was about to leave.

Practice

1. Explain the nuance of each future-in-the-past form.
2. Rewrite a past narrative to include a projected event.
3. Distinguish prediction, plan, schedule, and imminence.

Production challenge

Tell a short story about a plan that changed, using three future-in-the-past forms.

Watch for this

Do not treat would as the only future-in-the-past choice.

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

Modal scale: possibility, probability, certainty

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C1 TARGET

Use may, might, could, should, must, and related lexical forms accurately.

C2 EXTENSION

Calibrate epistemic force and avoid presenting inference as fact.

Core idea

Modality expresses a speaker's judgment, not an objective probability number.

Notice the effect

The delay may be temporary.

The delay should be temporary.

The delay must be temporary.

Practice

1. Rank the examples by the speaker's apparent confidence.
2. Create a five-step certainty scale for one proposition.
3. Compare modal verbs with adverbs such as probably and apparently.

Production challenge

Give a one-minute forecast containing at least five distinct degrees of certainty.

Watch for this

Do not interpret modal strength mechanically; context can shift pragmatic force.

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

Modal perfects and past evaluation

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C1 TARGET

Use must have, might have, should have, could have, needn't have, and can't have.

C2 EXTENSION

Express inference, regret, criticism, unrealized possibility, and unnecessary action precisely.

Core idea

Modal perfects combine stance with a backward-looking viewpoint.

Notice the effect

She must have misunderstood.

We should have checked earlier.

You needn't have brought anything.

Practice

1. Label each sentence as inference, criticism, possibility, or unnecessary action.
2. Create a contrast between didn't need to and needn't have.
3. Rewrite a regret using could have and should have.

Production challenge

Analyze a failed project using four different modal perfects without blaming beyond the evidence.

Watch for this

Be careful with 'must have' and 'can't have': they are strong inferences, not direct evidence.

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

Would: habit, volition, politeness, and hypothetical meaning

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C1 TARGET

Distinguish common uses of would beyond conditionals.

C2 EXTENSION

Exploit would for narrative habit, tentative stance, refusal, and future-in-the-past.

Core idea

Would is multifunctional; its meaning comes from syntax and discourse context.

Notice the effect

Every summer, we would visit my grandparents.

I would argue that the evidence is incomplete.

The printer wouldn't connect.

Practice

1. Identify the function of would in five sentences.
2. Rewrite a direct opinion using tentative would.
3. Contrast used to and would for past habits.

Production challenge

Speak for two minutes using would in at least four distinct functions.

Watch for this

Do not use would for past states where used to or past simple is required.

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

Passive voice and agent management

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C1 TARGET

Use passive forms flexibly across tenses and modals.

C2 EXTENSION

Choose passive, active, or agentless structures according to information flow and responsibility.

Core idea

The passive is not inherently formal; it manages focus by making the affected entity the grammatical subject.

Notice the effect

The samples were analyzed independently.

The team analyzed the samples independently.

It has been suggested that the policy be revised.

Practice

1. Identify what each version foregrounds.
2. Add an agent only when it contributes useful information.
3. Rewrite a passive-heavy paragraph in a balanced way.

Production challenge

Prepare a 150-word methods or process explanation using active and passive voice strategically.

Watch for this

Agentless passives can obscure responsibility; do not use them to hide who made a claim or decision when that matters.

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

Get-passives and informal affectedness

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C1 TARGET

Recognize and use common get-passives appropriately.

C2 EXTENSION

Use get-passives to express affectedness, change, or eventfulness without confusing them with standard passive style.

Core idea

Get-passives are common in conversation and often imply that something happened to the subject.

Notice the effect

He got promoted last month.

My phone got damaged on the trip.

They got invited at the last minute.

Practice

1. Compare tone with was promoted / was damaged / were invited.
2. Identify contexts where get-passive sounds too informal.
3. Create examples with positive and negative affectedness.

Production challenge

Tell a short personal story using two natural get-passives and two standard passives.

Watch for this

Do not assume get + past participle is always passive; get tired and get married behave differently in analysis.

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

Causatives: have/get something done and have someone do

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C1 TARGET

Use causative patterns to distinguish arranging a service from causing an action.

C2 EXTENSION

Control subtle responsibility and affectedness in formal and conversational contexts.

Core idea

Causatives let speakers focus on arranging, experiencing, or causing events rather than doing them directly.

Notice the effect

I had the report reviewed.

I had an editor review the report.

I got the screen replaced yesterday.

Practice

1. Explain who performed the action in each example.
2. Transform direct-action sentences into causatives.
3. Distinguish have, get, make, let, and help patterns.

Production challenge

Describe a project involving several delegated tasks using at least four causative structures.

Watch for this

Causative get is often more conversational than have; forced-choice verbs such as make carry different interpersonal meaning.

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

Reporting verbs and complementation

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C1 TARGET

Use verb patterns after advanced reporting verbs accurately.

C2 EXTENSION

Choose reporting verbs that encode stance, evidence, agreement, or criticism.

Core idea

The grammar after a reporting verb is part of the word: insist on doing, urge someone to do, deny doing, claim that.

Notice the effect

She acknowledged making the error.

They urged the committee to reconsider.

He maintained that the method was valid.

Practice

1. Build a pattern table for ten reporting verbs.
2. Rewrite said using more precise reporting verbs.
3. Check whether each verb takes that-clause, -ing, to-infinitive, or object + infinitive.

Production challenge

Summarize a debate using eight reporting verbs with correct complementation.

Watch for this

A precise reporting verb can imply attitude. Do not attribute criticism, admission, or certainty unless the source actually expressed it.

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

Verb patterns with meaning change

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C1 TARGET

Distinguish forms such as remember doing/to do, try doing/to do, stop doing/to do.

C2 EXTENSION

Use verb-pattern alternations to express subtle temporal or intentional differences.

Core idea

The complement form can change the meaning of the main verb.

Notice the effect

I remembered locking the door.

I remembered to lock the door.

Try restarting the device. / Try to restart the device.

Practice

1. Explain the meaning contrast in each pair.
2. Create your own minimal pairs.
3. Identify which interpretation is more natural in a given context.

Production challenge

Tell a story that naturally includes three verb-pattern meaning contrasts.

Watch for this

Do not memorize the complement in isolation; learn the meaning attached to each pattern.

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

Aspect with stative and dynamic meanings

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C1 TARGET

Use selected verbs in simple or continuous aspect according to meaning.

C2 EXTENSION

Exploit meaning shifts in verbs such as think, have, see, appear, and be.

Core idea

Some verbs can be stative in one sense and dynamic in another.

Notice the effect

I think you're right. / I'm thinking about the problem.

She has a car. / She's having lunch.

He is being unusually quiet.

Practice

1. Identify the meaning shift in each pair.
2. Create pairs for see, feel, taste, or appear.
3. Explain why 'being' is possible in a temporary behavior context.

Production challenge

Describe a changing situation using at least four verbs that shift between stative and dynamic meanings.

Watch for this

Avoid a blanket rule that stative verbs can never appear in continuous forms.

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

Tense and aspect in narrative sequencing

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C1 TARGET

Control background, foreground, earlier past, and result in extended narratives.

C2 EXTENSION

Use tense shifts as viewpoint tools rather than as isolated sentence choices.

Core idea

Narrative control depends on the relationship among events across a paragraph, not one verb at a time.

Notice the effect

I was driving when I noticed the warning light.

I had ignored it earlier, so I pulled over.

Since then, I have checked the dashboard more carefully.

Practice

1. Map the timeline of a short narrative.
2. Rewrite one story to begin in medias res, then backshift.
3. Use a perfect form to connect the story to the present.

Production challenge

Tell a 2-minute story with at least four tense/aspect choices and a clear timeline.

Watch for this

Do not jump tense merely because the paragraph becomes long.

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

Verb choice, valency, and argument structure

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C1 TARGET

Use advanced verbs with the complements they license.

C2 EXTENSION

Recast sentences when a desired verb has a different argument structure.

Core idea

Fluent vocabulary depends on grammar patterns such as provide someone with something, deprive someone of something, and distinguish X from Y.

Notice the effect

provide users with access

attribute the change to cost

distinguish correlation from causation

Practice

1. Build a verb + argument pattern for ten advanced verbs.
2. Repair sentences that copy a first-language preposition pattern.
3. Paraphrase the sentence when the direct translation does not fit English valency.

Production challenge

Explain a complex process using eight target verbs with correct objects and prepositions.

Watch for this

A dictionary meaning is incomplete if you do not also learn the verb's grammatical frame.

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

Editing tense, aspect, and modality as a system

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C1 TARGET

Audit a full text for timeline, viewpoint, certainty, and responsibility.

C2 EXTENSION

Make coordinated verb-system choices across paragraphs rather than correcting isolated forms.

Core idea

Advanced control means that tense, aspect, voice, and modality work together to show what happened, when, how certain you are, and who is responsible.

Notice the effect

timeline -> aspect -> modality -> voice

claim -> source -> certainty -> evidence

Practice

1. Mark every finite verb in a 200-word text.
2. Label its time, aspect, voice, and modal force.
3. Revise the text so the system is internally consistent.

Production challenge

Record or write a 3-minute case analysis, then perform a verb-system audit using four passes.

Watch for this

Local grammar can be correct while the overall timeline or stance is inconsistent.

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	Perfect aspect: result, experience, and current relevance	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
2	Perfect aspect: result, experience, and current relevance	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
3	Perfect continuous aspect	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
4	Perfect continuous aspect	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
5	Future in the past and projected viewpoint	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
6	Future in the past and projected viewpoint	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
7	Modal scale: possibility, probability, certainty	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
8	Modal scale: possibility, probability, certainty	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
9	Modal perfects and past evaluation	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
10	Modal perfects and past evaluation	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
11	Would: habit, volition, politeness, and hypothetical meaning	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
12	Would: habit, volition, politeness, and hypothetical meaning	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
13	Passive voice and agent management	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
14	Passive voice and agent management	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
15	Get-passives and informal affectedness	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	Get-passives and informal affectedness	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
17	Causatives: have/get something done and have someone do	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
18	Causatives: have/get something done and have someone do	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
19	Reporting verbs and complementation	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
20	Reporting verbs and complementation	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
21	Verb patterns with meaning change	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
22	Verb patterns with meaning change	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
23	Aspect with stative and dynamic meanings	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
24	Aspect with stative and dynamic meanings	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
25	Tense and aspect in narrative sequencing	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
26	Tense and aspect in narrative sequencing	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
27	Verb choice, valency, and argument structure	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
28	Verb choice, valency, and argument structure	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
29	Editing tense, aspect, and modality as a system	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
30	Editing tense, aspect, and modality as a system	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
Time	When does the situation occur relative to the reference point?
Aspect	Am I foregrounding state, event, process, completion, duration, or result?
Modality	How certain, necessary, possible, or hypothetical is the claim?
Voice	Who or what should be the grammatical focus?
Agent	Does responsibility need to be explicit?
Complement	What grammar pattern does this verb require?
Narrative	Is the timeline consistent across sentences?
Evidence	Does the verb system overstate what I actually know?

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 control perfect and continuous aspect across extended discourse.
- I can calibrate modal force and use modal perfects accurately.
- I can choose active, passive, get-passive, and causative structures for discourse purpose.
- I can use reporting verbs with correct complementation.
- I can manage tense and aspect across a narrative timeline.
- I can audit a paragraph for time, viewpoint, certainty, and responsibility.

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.