

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Level and target audience

This course in Dutch as a Foreign Language is aimed at users in higher education or evening classes. The course is designed to be used in a classroom context. However, the key and the explanations on grammar do make it possible to use the book for self-study, even though (occasional) assistance from a teacher is advisable.

The book is an accelerated course; it starts completely from scratch and takes you up to a level of competence where you can understand complex language, and where you can express yourself fluently in many different situations. As well as learning practical language skills, you will learn communicative strategies, such as how to adapt your style and tone according to who you are communicating with. And finally, you will gain some knowledge and understanding of Dutch and Flemish culture.

Common European Framework

In terms of practical language skills the course is on a par with level B2 of the Common European Framework for Languages. In terms of intellectual competences, such as manipulating language stylistically and language awareness, the course goes beyond this level. The four domains described by the Common European Framework are all present here. Topics and language skills at the start of the course focus on the private domain, i.e. your immediate surroundings in a private context, and increasingly look outwards towards activities in the public domain. In the latter part of the course you will practise skills which are relevant to the world of work and educational contexts, such as holding a debate, writing an argument or giving a presentation. Topics become increasingly abstract and challenging and include areas such as lifestyles, your place in society and national identity.

Approach

The distinctive approach of this course lies in its integration of learning the language in relation to its cultural context. The course looks at language in a critical way and asks questions such as: How is language used in particular contexts? Why is it used this way? What are the effects of using certain language structures or certain words? In addition, you will find information on cultural aspects of the Netherlands and Flanders throughout the course, with a particular focus on modern day Flanders and the Netherlands in the last three units.

This course is also distinctive in its approach to the progress of language skills: starting from simple grammar only, while encouraging authentic language use from the start. This ensures that you will learn to manipulate patterns correctly. Focusing initially on simple grammatical patterns only will give you the chance to quickly build up a body of vocabulary.

Structure

The book has 11 units. Progress is carefully structured in terms of language skills and topics. Topics move from the personal to the public, from the practical to the abstract. The tasks you will be asked to do also become increasingly challenging.

You are encouraged right from the start to think about style, so you develop ‘a feel’ for the language very quickly. For this reason, for instance, modal particles, the little words that colour communicative interaction, are introduced early on, although initially you only need to recognise the meaning of these receptively.

All units contain reading texts and listening texts, called *Tekst*, and texts for closer analysis, called *A closer look*. The latter are designed either to look at certain strategies the writer may have used, to recognise the implied messages in texts or to recognise the stylistic impact of certain ways of writing. Each unit also has sections on grammar, called *Structuren*; on language functions and issues of style and social communications, called *Communicatie*; and some informative sections explaining the cultural references in the texts, called *Cultuur*.

In addition, each unit has a plethora of exercises which allow you to practise all the skills. The exercises are designed to progress from guided and controlled exercises, practising particular grammar structures or language functions, to increasingly less-guided exercises in which you learn to manipulate language for specific contexts and purposes. Revision exercises are included throughout the course, revisiting previously learnt vocabulary or language patterns.

Units are subdivided into sections, each starting with a text or dialogue, followed by a vocabulary list and information on grammar, functions and social communication found in that particular text.

On the Routledge website (www.routledge.com/intensive/dutch), you can find a self-evaluation form, so that you can keep track of your progress throughout the course. You can photocopy this form and fill it in after you have completed each unit. The answer key can also be found on this website.

How to use the course

As mentioned the course is designed for use in a classroom situation, but can be used – with assistance – as a self-study course. The key to the exercises helps you with this. However, you should note that in the case of questions which ask for an interpretation, the answer in the key is the interpretation of the authors. Your or your teacher’s answers may differ, but may be just as valid.

In a university context the course will take approximately 160 contact hours to complete. In addition to these contact hours you will need to spend the same amount of time on preparation and homework.

Further guidance on how to use this book can be obtained from the teacher notes on the Routledge website.