

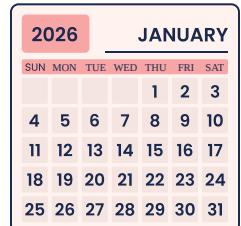
Rethinking New Beginnings

Cambridge C1 (Advanced)

Conversations: From January to New Beginnings



1. Why do people often associate *January* with new beginnings?
2. Do you think starting again is mainly about behaviour, identity, or circumstances?
3. Can a new beginning happen without a clear starting point (e.g. a new year, a new job)?



Reading Texts - Starting Anew

You are going to read four extracts from articles in which writers reflect on the idea of *starting anew*.



Fill in the chart to summarize what each author is saying about change:

- ✓ agree
- ✗ disagree
- ? unclear



Issue	A	B	C	D
<i>Rejecting the past</i>				
<i>Limits on choice</i>				
<i>Uncertainty = opportunity</i>				

A – Elena Marwick

Public discourse tends to frame new beginnings as moments of rupture, as though transformation only becomes possible once what came before has been decisively rejected. I find this misleading. Most transitions are quieter affairs: a recalibration rather than a reinvention. People rarely abandon their past so much as reinterpret it, carrying forward skills, assumptions and even regrets into new contexts. In this sense, starting again is less about escape and more about continuity under altered conditions.

B – Thomas Iqbal

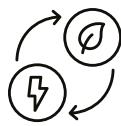
There is a persistent cultural obsession with the idea that meaningful change must be dramatic to be authentic. Career changes, relocations, even personal reinventions are often judged by how visible and disruptive they appear. Yet this fixation obscures an uncomfortable truth: many so-called fresh starts simply reproduce existing hierarchies and patterns. Without a critical examination of the structures one is moving into, change risks being cosmetic rather than substantive.

C – Mirela Dobrev

Periods of transition, whether chosen or imposed, often expose how dependent identity is on external validation. When professional titles, social roles or familiar routines are stripped away, individuals are forced to confront a more unstable sense of self. While this uncertainty is frequently framed as a problem to be solved, it can also function as a space of possibility, in which assumptions are suspended and alternative ways of being become thinkable.

D – Patrick Hume

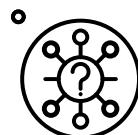
Discussions of new beginnings tend to emphasise personal agency, overlooking the extent to which starting again is shaped by constraint. Economic necessity, institutional barriers and social expectations all delimit the range of viable options available to individuals. Nevertheless, to focus exclusively on limitation risks denying people's capacity for adaptation. Even within restricted circumstances, individuals often find ways to redefine success on their own terms.



This writer believes that new beginnings are...



This writer believes that new beginnings are...



This writer believes that new beginnings are...



This writer believes that new beginnings are...

Exam Practice – Multiple Matching (Part 6)

Which writer:

1. expresses a similar view to Marwick regarding continuity between past and present when people start again?	
2. shares a similar opinion with Hume about the limitations of individual control in starting anew?	
3. takes a contrasting position to the majority on whether uncertainty during transitions is mainly negative?	
4. expresses a different view from the others on whether a new beginning usually involves a break from the past?	

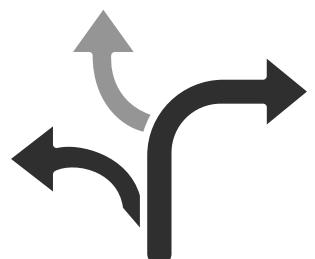
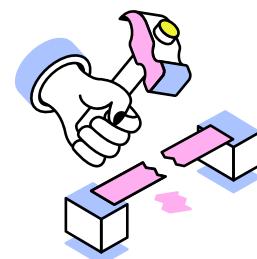
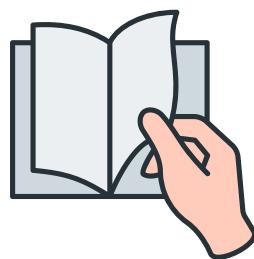
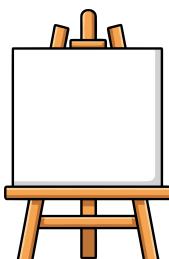
Which author do you identify with the most? Why?

Idioms & Fixed Expressions about Change

Work in small groups to ask and answer. See if you can identify the idioms and match them with the definitions in the vocabulary table



1. Many people feel they are **at a crossroads** at different points in life. What situations typically create this feeling?
2. Do you think it is ever really possible to **start with a blank slate**, or does the past always shape new beginnings?
3. Can you think of a decision in your life (or someone else's) that clearly **marked a turning point**? What made it significant?
4. Is it better to **follow a well-trodden path** or **to break new ground** when making major life choices? Why?
5. Some people deliberately try to **reinvent themselves** when they move to a new place or start a new role. How effective do you think this is?
6. January often encourages people to feel they should **turn the page**. Do you see this as motivating or artificial?



Idiom	Definition
	A. To continue in a way that many others have done before
	B. To deliberately end one phase in order to begin another
	C. To begin something in a completely new or original way
	D. To represent a moment when significant change begins
	E. To be at a moment where an important decision must be made
	F. To begin again without being influenced by the past
	G. To change how you present or understand yourself



Vocabulary in Context

Complete the sentences with an expression from the table. You may need to change the form.

1. After graduating, many people find themselves _____, unsure whether to continue studying, move abroad, or enter the workforce.
2. Although moving to a new country can feel like a chance to _____, previous experiences often continue to influence how people see themselves and others.
3. The decision to leave a secure job in order to pursue a passion project clearly _____ in her professional life.
4. Some individuals prefer to _____, choosing careers or lifestyles that are familiar and socially accepted, rather than taking significant risks.
5. Others are more motivated to _____, particularly when they feel that conventional options no longer reflect their values or ambitions.
6. When people start a new job or move to a different city, they sometimes attempt to _____, adopting new habits or even new identities.
7. The start of a new year often creates pressure to _____, even when no meaningful change has actually taken place.

Answer Key

Reading Texts - Starting Anew

Issue	A	B	C	D
Rejecting the past	✗	✓	✓	✗
Limits on choice	✗	✓	✗	✓
Uncertainty = opportunity	✗	✗	✓	✗

Exam Practice – Multiple Matching (Part 6)

Question 1

shares a similar opinion with Hume about the limitations of individual control in starting anew

Answer: B (Thomas Iqbal)

Explanation:

- **B** argues that many fresh starts are constrained by existing hierarchies and structures, making change potentially superficial.
- **D** presents a closely related idea, focusing on economic necessity, institutional barriers and social expectations that limit personal agency.
- The key similarity lies in their shared emphasis on **external constraints**, rather than purely personal choice.

Question 2

takes a contrasting position to the majority on whether uncertainty during transitions is mainly negative

Answer: C (Mirela Dobrev)

Explanation:

- **C** reframes uncertainty as a “space of possibility” in which assumptions are suspended and alternatives emerge.
- **A, B, and D** all treat uncertainty more cautiously, linking it to instability, limitation, or the risk of superficial change.
- **C** therefore contrasts with the majority by presenting uncertainty as potentially productive.

Question 3

expresses a similar view to Marwick regarding continuity between past and present when people start again

Answer: D (Patrick Hume)

Explanation:

- **A** stresses reinterpretation of the past rather than escape from it.
- **D** similarly suggests that even within constraints, individuals “redefine success on their own terms”, implying adaptation rather than rejection of previous experience.
- **B** and **C** focus more on structural critique or identity disruption, making them less aligned with Marwick’s emphasis on continuity.

Question 4

expresses a different view from the others on whether a new beginning usually involves rejecting the past entirely

Answer: A (Elena Marwick)

Explanation:

- **A** explicitly rejects the idea of rupture, describing new beginnings as a “recalibration rather than a reinvention” and emphasising continuity with the past.
- **B**, **C**, and **D** all accept, to varying degrees, that starting again involves disruption, instability, or a break from previous structures (even if they evaluate this differently).
- **A** is therefore the outlier in denying that rejection of the past is central to new beginnings.

Idioms & Fixed Expressions about Change

Idiom	Definition
follow a well-trodden path	A. To continue in a way that many others have done before
turn the page	B. To deliberately end one phase in order to begin another
break new ground	C. To begin something in a completely new or original way
mark a turning point	D. To represent a moment when significant change begins
be at a crossroads	E. To be at a moment where an important decision must be made
start with a blank slate	F. To begin again without being influenced by the past
reinvent oneself	G. To change how you present or understand yourself

Vocabulary in Context

1. at a crossroads
2. start with a blank slate
3. mark a turning point
4. follow a well-trodden path
5. break new ground
6. reinvent themselves
7. turn the page