

4 Point Overview

The **4 Point** series is designed for English language learners whose primary goal is to succeed in an academic setting. While grammar points and learning strategies are certainly important, academic English learners need skills-based books that focus on reading, listening, and speaking, as well as the two primary language bases of vocabulary and grammar.

The Introduction to EAP level is designed for students in academic programs who need a more general introduction to authentic academic content. The discrete skills **4 Point** volumes are designed for programs and courses that want a more intensive focus on authentic academic content in one skill area. We have created these volumes on individual skills because customers wanted authentic academic content at this level, but they wanted to be able to focus on one skill at a time. The ultimate goal is to help your students improve these skills and earn a 4.0 (G.P.A.).

4 Point covers academic skills while providing reinforcement and systematic recycling of key vocabulary and further exposure to grammar issues. The goal of this series is to help students improve their ability in each of these critical skills and thereby enable the students to have sufficient English to succeed in their final academic setting, whether it be community college, college, or university.

Many ESL students report great difficulties upon entering their academic courses after they leave the safe haven of their English class with other non-native speakers and their sympathetic and caring ESL teachers. Their academic instructors speak quickly, give long reading assignments due the next day, and deliver classroom lectures and interactions at rapid, native speed. In sum, ESL students who have gone through a sheltered classroom setting are in for a rather rude awakening in a new learning situation where English is taken for granted and no one seems to understand the new reality of the dilemmas facing ESL students. Through these materials, we hope to lessen the shock of such an awakening. The activities in **4 Point** achieve the goal of helping students experience what life beyond the ESL classroom is like while they are still in our sheltered classrooms.

These volumes focus very heavily on vocabulary because language learners know that they are far behind their native-speaker counterparts when it comes to vocabulary. Each book highlights key vocabulary items, including individual words, compound words, phrasal verbs, short phrases, idioms, metaphors, collocations, and longer set lexical phrases. In learning vocabulary, the two most

important features are frequency of retrievals (i.e., in exercises) and the spacing between these retrievals. Interactive web-based exercises provide additional opportunities for students to practice their academic vocabulary learning at their convenience (www.press.umich.edu/elt/compsite/4Point/).

Using the Exercises in This Book (Reading)

Each unit includes two reading passages on the same topic within a field of academic study. The exercises accompanying the readings are meant to strengthen a range of reading skills, notably:

- understanding the big picture
- developing vocabulary acquisition strategies
- developing strategies for understanding academic texts through before-reading, during-reading, and after-reading strategies
- summarizing, as it relates to reading

Special attention was given to providing material that would expose students to the types of texts that might be common in difficult academic disciplines. The goal is to provide students with a variety of strategies/tools to master whatever academic texts they may encounter. In addition, the inclusion of three types of reading strategies—before, during, and after—is unprecedented in ESL textbooks but is grounded in the realities of today's academic content and in the research on the strategies used by successful readers.

Getting Started

The discussion questions before each reading passage should prompt students to begin thinking about relevant topics and issues. These discussions should be allowed to range freely. Often these questions provide opportunities for students to anticipate content and, therefore, may be revisited throughout the unit.

Strategy/Skill Boxes

Other types of strategies and skills—primarily related to reading and vocabulary—are highlighted at various points throughout the units. Each appears in a display box with a short explanation and is followed by an activity to explicitly practice what has been learned.

Reading for the Big Picture

Each reading in a unit is followed by short “big picture” questions. These questions are designed only to gauge student comprehension of the reading’s main points.

Summarizing What You Have Read

Every reading is accompanied by an exercise in which students produce a few focused summaries. These represent only the “core” of meaning in the originals. As in any summary, students have to recognize and produce alternate wording for the concepts in the original sentence. In a focused summary, however, students also have to distinguish the sentence’s central proposition(s) from the “distractions” of extra modifiers, parenthetical asides, lists of examples, and so on.

Emphasis on Vocabulary Learning

One of the best features of this book that separates it from other academic preparation books is the heavy focus on vocabulary. We recognize—as our students certainly do—that they face serious difficulties because of their limited vocabulary. The vocabulary levels of the best ESL students are often insufficient to cope with daily academic work, whether it be the vocabulary in a professor’s lecture, the course book, a group discussion project, or a term paper. We would even go so far as to say that the single most important assistance we can give our students is to help them increase their academic vocabulary.

To meet this important lexical goal, this book explicitly teaches and practices a great deal of key vocabulary. Most notably, the readings are authentic and have not been watered down. In other words, they have not been rewritten in the traditional ESL-ese language.

Each unit contains two **Vocabulary Power** activities, each of which consists of eight vocabulary items in bold that students must match with the correct definitions. The vocabulary is used in context, so this activity practices vocabulary items in their natural context. This activity previews the vocabulary as well as the reading. This natural context is more difficult than the usual watered down material found in many ESL textbooks.

Learners are given a list of ten vocabulary items from the readings in **Your Active Vocabulary in the Real World**. Learners are asked to decide whether a given word is more useful in their reading, writing, listening, or speaking. In this critical-thinking task, learners are expected to consider how they might actually need this new vocabulary item. We know vocabulary is important, but we cannot teach our learners all the words they need. Therefore, a **major goal of this book is to help train our learners to become active vocabulary seekers**, which

means when they encounter a new word, they need to decide if the word is one they really need to know to be able to use it in their writing or speaking or if they are more likely to hear that word in a lecture or conversation or read it in a passage. In other words, we want our learners to recognize the difference between words they need to be able to use and words they need to be able to recognize. These activities are designed to generate class discussion.

Rapid Vocabulary Review reviews the target vocabulary in the unit. It is divided into two sections—synonyms and combinations and associations. The first is straightforward: One item out of three is closest in meaning to the target item, and students indicate which one it is. The second section involves more lateral thinking. The correct answer may stand in any of several relationships to the target term. It may complete a phrase involving the target item, it may name a category to which the target item belongs, or it may state an effect of which the target item is a cause. Some students may be unfamiliar with such a non-linear form of vocabulary review, but it is an essential part of comprehensive vocabulary study. Students should be encouraged to persevere.

Crucial to the vocabulary acquisition process is the initial noticing of unknown vocabulary. Students must notice the vocabulary in some way, and this noticing then triggers awareness of the item and draws the attention of learners to the word in all subsequent encounters, whether the word is read in a passage or heard in a conversation or lecture. To facilitate noticing and then multiple retrievals of new vocabulary, we have included a chart listing approximately 20 to 25 key vocabulary items at the end of each unit. This **Vocabulary Log** has three columns and requires students to provide a definition or translation in the second column and then an original example or note about usage in the third column. In this third column, students can use the word in a phrase or sentence, or they can also add usage information about the word such as *usually negative*, *very formal sounding*, or *used only with the word launch*, for example. As demonstrated in *Vocabulary Myths* (Folse, 2004, University of Michigan Press), there is no research showing that a definition is better than a translation or vice-versa, so we suggest that you let students decide which one they prefer. After all, this log is each student's individual vocabulary notebook, so students should use whatever information is helpful and that will help the student remember and use the vocabulary item. If the log information is not deemed useful, the learner will not review this material—which defeats the whole purpose of keeping the notebook.

EAP Projects (Synthesizing)

Students are often expected to proceed from what they learned via reading passages. The series includes projects designed to mimic actual assignments or test questions students are likely to encounter in their academic courses. One or two prompts are for pieces that could be done in a one-hour class period or part of a class period. Typically, these prompts encourage students to do some planning as homework before the activity. There are two prompts per unit that require more outside reading and a longer finished product. They are meant to be assigned as homework and are ideal for a flipped or blended learning environment. For additional ideas about flipping using **4 Point**, see *Flip It! Strategies for the ESL Classroom* (Lockwood, 2014, University of Michigan Press). The directions in such prompts ask students to do some light research. The suggested lengths are just that—suggestions.

These long assignments are not meant to be formal. This book does not comprehensively address specific issues of formal academic writing. Teachers are free, of course, to turn one or two of these projects into something longer, more formal, and with higher stakes, if they would like to combine reading and writing. These projects are included as an appendix, so teachers are free to skip these longer projects without sacrificing learning objectives if time is short.

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