

## Series Overview

*Four Point* is a four-volume series 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 Language Learners (ELLs) need skills-based books that focus on the four primary skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a realistic, integrated format, as well as the two primary language bases of vocabulary and grammar. To this end, the *Four Point* series offers a unique combination of instructional material and activities that truly require students to read, write, speak, and listen in a multitude of combinations.

*Four Point* has two levels. Level 1 is upper-intermediate (TOEFL® PBT 440–480). Book 2 is advanced (TOEFL® PBT 480–520). While academic listening and speaking skills are covered in one volume and academic reading and writing are covered in another, *all four skills are integrated throughout all books*, so a given task may focus on speaking and listening but have a reading and/or writing component to it as well.

### Developing the Four Skills in *Four Point*

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

Many ELLs report great difficulties upon entering their academic courses after they leave the safe haven of their English class with other nonnative speakers and their sympathetic and caring ESL teachers. Their academic instructors speak quickly, give long reading assignments due the next day, deliver classroom lectures and interactions at rapid, native speed, and sometimes balk at the excessive errors in their ELLs' writing. In sum, the ELL who has gone through a sheltered classroom setting is in for a rather rude awakening in a new learning situation where English is taken for granted and no one seems to understand or care much about the new reality of dilemmas of ELLs. Through these materials, we hope to lessen the shock of such an awakening.

The activities in *Four Point* achieve the goal of helping ELLs experience what life beyond the ESL classroom is like while they are still in a sheltered classroom. This chart explains some of the activities in *Four Point*:

Reading	Listening
Students will read longer, more difficult readings on interesting academic topics that represent the array of interests in a classroom. Extensive pleasure reading is good, but ELLs need practice for the type of reading they will find in their academic course books as well.	Students will have to listen to both short and long lectures to not only pick out details and facts but also practice picking up on speaker intentions or attitudes. Students will also gain experience listening to multiple native speakers at the same time.
Writing	Speaking
Students will write both short and long assignments that can be organized around more traditional writing templates such as the model paragraph or five-paragraph essay.	Students will practice both short and long extemporaneous speaking and thereby develop their speaking fluency, an area often overlooked in many ESL books. Students will also practice interrupting, maintaining the floor, and adding speech to another speaker's ideas on the spot.

## Maximizing Coverage of the Two Primary Language Bases

ESL materials have come a long way from the old days of equating repetitive grammar drills for speaking practice or copying sentences for writing practice. However, in the ensuing shift from focus on language to focus on communication, very little was developed to address the needs of academic ELLs who need to do much more in English than engage in conversations about daily events, fill out job applications, or read short pieces of text for pleasure. It was the proverbial “baby being thrown out with the bath water” as emphasis on grammar and vocabulary was downplayed. However, in order to participate in academic settings, our ELLs certainly need focused activities to develop and then maintain their use of vocabulary and grammar. Toward this end, the *Four Point* series provides further exposure of key grammar issues without overt practice activities.

More important, these books focus very heavily on vocabulary because ELLs realize that they are way behind their native-speaker counterparts when it comes to vocabulary. Each book highlights between 125–150 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. Spaced rehearsal is accomplished in two ways. First, after words appear in a textbook, they will reappear multiple times afterward. Second, interactive web-based exercises provide more than ample opportunities for ELLs to practice their vocabulary learning through spaced rehearsals at the student's convenience ([www.press.umich.edu/esl/compsite/4Point/](http://www.press.umich.edu/esl/compsite/4Point/)).

## General Overview of Units

Each of the books is divided into six units with numerous activities within each unit. The material in each of the volumes could be covered in ten to twelve weeks, but this number is flexible depending on the students and the teacher, and the depth to which the material is practiced.

## Using the Exercises in This Book

Each unit includes two lectures on the same topic within a field of academic study. The exercises accompanying the lectures are meant to strengthen a range of listening and speaking skills, notably:

- understanding main ideas
- comprehending details
- understanding classroom discourse
- using academic language functions
- recognizing signal words and phrases
- developing vocabulary
- synthesizing information

In addition to more general listening comprehension tasks, most units include a specific listening focus, such as listening for persuasion, listening for definition cues, or listening for numbers. The lectures range in length from approximately four to seven minutes. In addition, most of the other tasks are between three and five minutes, offering practice with longer, connected discourse that students need to build listening comprehension skills. Lectures and other material are provided on the audio CD packaged with the book. Six video clips can be found online at [www.press.umich.edu/esl/compsite/4Point/](http://www.press.umich.edu/esl/compsite/4Point/).

### **Pre-Listening Activities**

A range of pre-listening discussion questions is included; each has the purpose of activating prior knowledge about and generating interest in the topics in the unit. Often these questions provide opportunities for students to anticipate content and, therefore, may be revisited throughout the unit. All of the pre-listening tasks lead to pair or small group discussions.

### **Note-Taking Strategies**

Each unit introduces a note-taking strategy, allowing students to develop a repertoire of techniques to choose from in their studies. As students' preferences vary, it is important to supply them with options. It is certainly possible that students can draw on formats that work particularly well for them in one unit as they practice and develop their note-taking skills in another.

Other types of strategies and skills—those related to listening, speaking, and vocabulary—are highlighted at various points throughout the units. Each appears in a display box with a short explanation.

### **Listening Activities**

Each note-taking activity in a unit is followed by main idea and detailed comprehension questions. The main idea questions serve to help students summarize ideas from their notes. Students can listen to the lecture again as they complete the multiple choice questions for Check Your Understanding: Details. The listening passage allows students to practice the strategy and/or hear the signal words or phrases in use.

### **Vocabulary Activities**

Vocabulary Power activities appear once in each unit. The words chosen for these tasks are ones that may appear in a variety of academic settings. These activities serve to further check students' comprehension of the lecture. These words are likely to be useful to the students as they move on to the extensive speaking activities at the end of each unit: the Rapid Vocabulary Review, which focuses on synonyms and combinations and associations, and the Vocabulary Log. Students could also be asked to listen to portions of the lecture again to discover if they recognize the words used in context.

## **In-Class Interactions/Classroom Discourse**

In addition to the lectures, each unit includes activities based on the in-class interactions students are likely to encounter in post-secondary classrooms. Throughout the units, students participate in group activities that allow them to use the speaking phrases taught in the unit. Other activities include You Be the Judge, debates, and in-depth discussions. The resolutions to the You Be the Judge activities, the actual court cases, appear at the back of the book.

Six video clips are provided on the companion website ([www.press.umich.edu/esl/compsite/4Point/](http://www.press.umich.edu/esl/compsite/4Point/)) to analyze for language, tone, and nonverbal cues as well as generate discussion on academic listening and speaking tasks. Throughout the interaction, the students use many of the phrases and employ the strategies taught in the unit—and, in some cases, not using the best communication strategies. ELLs will have the opportunity to hear the phrases used in a natural conversation, practice their listening skills, analyze verbal and nonverbal communication skills of the students, and think critically about and discuss the interaction with their classmates. Questions in the book require students to listen for certain phrases and identify what they mean; notice the tone of voice and think about how it changes the dynamics of a discussion; recognize the influence of nonverbal communication by increasing their awareness of facial expressions, gestures, and other cues; and compile all of these ideas into an analytical discussion about the interaction in the video.

## **Reading Tasks**

Each unit includes a reading generally used as the impetus for more extensive speaking activities and as a way to practice the strategies. As such, they do not include detailed comprehension questions. As the topics in the units are current, the instructor could easily supplement a unit with current online readings.

## **Synthesizing: Projects and Presentations**

The summative task for each unit includes four projects that relate to the topic and encourage practice of the listening and speaking concepts. Students prepare projects and presentations based on what they have learned via the lectures, readings, discussions, or Internet or library research. For group projects, students should be given adequate time to clarify group roles and to work on their projects.

## **Rapid Vocabulary Review and Vocabulary Log**

A vocabulary review task appears at the end of each unit and gives students another opportunity to check their understanding of key words. The correct

answer is a synonym or brief definition. Crucial to the vocabulary acquisition process is the initial noticing of unknown vocabulary. ELLs must notice the vocabulary in some way, and this noticing then triggers awareness of the item and draws the learner's attention 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 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.

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 ELLs decide which one they prefer. After all, this log is each student's individual vocabulary notebook, so students should use whatever information is helpful to them and that will help them 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. In the 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.

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