

Series Overview

Four Point is a six-volume series designed for English language learners (ELLs) whose primary goal is to succeed in an academic setting. While grammar points and learning strategies are certainly important, academic 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, listen, and speak in a multitude of combinations.

Four Point has three English for Academic Purposes (EAP) levels. The Intro level is designed for students in academic programs who need a more general introduction to academic reading and writing. Level 1 is designed for the first level of EAP instruction in a post-secondary institution. Level 2 follows for the subsequent level of EAP instruction. The levels align to a school's individual EAP courses, not to traditional English language course levels. 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. The ultimate goal is to help your students improve these skills and earn a 4.0 (G.P.A.).

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 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 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 non-native 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 shel-

tered 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 the new reality of the 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 our ELLs experience what life beyond the ESL classroom is like while they are still in our sheltered classroom. This chart explains some of the activities in *Four Point*:

Reading	Listening
Students will read longer, more difficult authentic readings on interesting academic topics that represent the array of interests in a classroom. Students will get practice using strategies such as understanding difficult readings, SQ3R, and understanding the author's goals.	Students will have to listen to short conversations, academic discussions, and long lectures to not only identify details and facts but also practice understanding speaker intentions or attitudes. Students will also gain experience listening to multiple native speakers at the same time in a group setting.
Writing	Speaking
Students will write both short and long assignments. Special emphasis is given to the academic writing skills of paraphrasing and summarizing as well as using citations.	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 useful speaking phrases, including comparing and contrasting, demonstrating comprehension, and asking for explanation.

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 reinforcement of key grammar issues without overt practice activities.

More important, these books focus very heavily on vocabulary because ELLs realize that they are far 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 the 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 (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 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 and writing 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
- paraphrasing
- summarizing
- synthesizing information

Special attention was given to providing material that would expose students to the types of texts and writing assignments that might be common in difficult aca-

demic 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.

Strategy/Skill Boxes

Other types of strategies and skills—primarily related to reading, writing, 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.

Paraphrasing to Simplify

Every reading is accompanied by an exercise, in which students produce three focused paraphrases. These represent only the “core” of meaning in the originals. As in any paraphrase, students have to recognize and produce alternate wording for the concepts in the original sentence. In a focused paraphrase, 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.

Short Writing Tasks: Summary and Research

Each unit has two prompts for writing short pieces related to the topic of the unit. Suggested lengths range from 4–6 sentences to 6–8 sentences. These are general guidelines only. Most of them could generate longer pieces of writing if the instructor wishes. The main aim at this point in the unit, however, is to push students’ ability to include complex ideas in their writing.

Synthesizing: Writing Projects

Students are expected to proceed from what they learned via the reading passages to writing academically. Projects are 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 written 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 in-class writing. There are two prompts per unit that require more outside reading and a longer finished product. They are meant to be assigned as homework assignments. The directions in such prompts ask students to do some light research. The suggested lengths are just that—suggestions.

These long writing assignments are not meant to be formal term papers. This book does not comprehensively address specific issues of formal academic citation, but it does discuss ways to acknowledge the sources of one's information (see Unit 5). Teachers are free, of course, to turn one or two of these writing projects into something longer, more formal, and with higher stakes. They are also free to skip these longer projects without sacrificing learning objectives if time is short.

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 ELLs 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, our 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 these activities: Vocabulary Power, Your Active Vocabulary in the Real World, Rapid Vocabulary Review, and Vocabulary Log.

VOCABULARY POWER

Each unit contains two of these 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.

YOUR ACTIVE VOCABULARY IN THE REAL WORLD

In this activity, learners are given a list of ten vocabulary items from the readings. 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

This activity 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.

VOCABULARY LOG

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 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. 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 the individual student 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. 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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