

# Contemporary Topics

21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills for Academic Success

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**FOURTH EDITION**

## **Alignment with the Global Scale of English and Common European Framework of Reference**

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The **Contemporary Topics** series provides a comprehensive approach to developing 21<sup>st</sup> century academic skills and preparing students for participation in real-life academic and professional contexts. The overriding principle of language and skill development in the series is engagement. Authentic, stimulating content includes compelling lectures on a range of academic topics, and allows students to experience the value of exchanging ideas. Focused listening tasks, personalized discussions, challenging tests, and authentic presentation assignments enable students to explore each topic deeply. Activities in each unit are sequenced in a way that gives students increasing involvement and self-direction in mastering the skills they need to succeed—including listening, thinking, discussion, presentation, and study skills. *Contemporary Topics* bridges the gap between language-focused and content-focused instruction, based on an engaging nine-part methodology embedded in each unit:

**Section 1: Connect to the Topic** invites students to activate what they already know about the topic from personal experiences and beliefs.

**Section 2: Build Your Vocabulary** familiarizes students with some of the key content words and phrases used in the lecture. Each lecture targets 10–15 key words from the Academic Word List.

**Section 3: Focus Your Attention** provides specific coaching tips to help students direct their attention and gain more control of how they listen and how. Students learn strategies for listening actively and taking clear notes.

**Section 4: Watch the Lecture** allows for two full listening cycles, one to focus on “top-down listening” strategies (Listen for Main Ideas) and one to focus on “bottom-up listening” strategies (Listen for Details).

**Section 5: Hear the Language** provides “bottom-up” listening strategies and pronunciation guidance: students perform tasks to increase their listening skills.

**Section 6: Talk About the Topic** focuses on building discussion skills as an important part of academic success. Discussion strategies modeled and examined across the units include the following:

- Agreeing
- Asking for clarification or confirmation
- Asking for opinions or ideas
- Disagreeing
- Expressing an opinion
- Keeping a discussion on topic
- Offering a fact or example
- Trying to reach a consensus
- Paraphrasing

**Section 7: Review Your Notes** develops study skills related to using notes for review and discussion. Students are guided in reviewing the content of the unit, clarifying concepts, and preparing for the Unit Test.

**Section 8: Take the Unit Test and Proficiency Assessment** completes the study cycle of the unit: preparation for the lecture, listening to the lecture, review of the content, and assessment. Test taking skills include verbatim recall, paraphrasing, inferencing, and synthesizing information from different parts of the lecture.

**Section 9: Express Your Ideas** creates a natural extension of the unit topic to areas that are relevant. Students are guided through the process of preparing, practicing, and presenting on a topic of personal interest as well as on providing helpful feedback to other students’ presentations.

# The Global Scale of English and The Common European Framework of Reference

The Global Scale of English is a standardized, granular scale from 10 to 90 which measures English language proficiency. It is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Unlike the CEFR, which describes proficiency in terms of broad levels, the Global Scale of English identifies what a learner can do at each point on a more granular scale—and within a CEFR level. The scale is designed to motivate learners by demonstrating incremental progress in their language ability. The Global Scale of English forms the backbone for Pearson English course material and assessment.

CEFR and the Global Scale of English both comprise a number of Can Do statements, or “learning objectives,” for each of the four language skills, describing what learners should be able to do at different levels of proficiency. The learning objectives are written to reflect what a student “Can Do” with language without regard to the context in which a language skill may surface. The GSE Learning Objectives have been aligned to the CEFR, and many additional statements created, rated for difficulty, and calibrated to the scale. This document provides an overview of the learning objectives that are covered in each unit of the course. As the learning objectives focus specifically on language skills, some learning objectives will be repeated multiple times, a reflection of the fact that skills are built through practice in multiple contexts. For each learning objective we indicate whether a statement is from the original CEFR or newly created by Pearson English:

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(N2000) North (2000) descriptor, verbatim

(N2000a) North (2000) descriptor, adapted or edited

(P) New Pearson English descriptor

*[Note: If a value is in parentheses, it indicates the learning objective is still undergoing research and validation, and therefore the value is a provisional estimate.]*

Visit [English.com/gse](http://English.com/gse) to learn more about the Global Scale of English.

## References

Council of Europe (2001) Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Schneider, Guenther and North, Brian (1999) ‘In anderen Sprachen kann ich’ . . . Skalen zur Beschreibung, Beurteilung und Selbsteinschätzung der fremdsprachlichen Kommunikationsfähigkeit. Berne, Project Report, National Research Programme 33, Swiss National Science Research Council.

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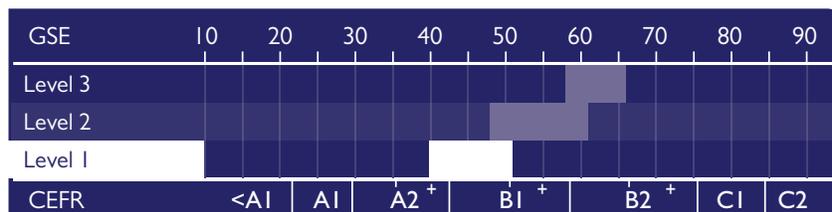
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*Contemporary Topics* is aligned with the Global Scale of English and the Common European Framework of Reference. **It takes learners from CEFR A2+ to B1 (40–51 on the Global Scale of English).** Each lesson guides students to a “Can Do” goal in line with the Global Scale of English and the Common European Framework “Can Do” statements.



Learn more about the Global Scale of English at [english.com/gse](https://english.com/gse)

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### UNIT 1 PSYCHOLOGY – Happiness

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Lecture topic and organization

**PRONUNCIATION** – Syllable stress

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Agreeing; Disagreeing

**PRESENTATION** – Present on how to be happier while showing confidence

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can derive the probable meaning of simple, unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	41	A2+ (36–42)	4
Listening	Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	48	B1 (43–50)	6
Listening	Can identify key details in a simple recorded dialogue or narrative.	39	A2+ (36–42)	7
Listening	Can recognize when speakers agree in a conversation conducted slowly and clearly.	36	A2+ (36–42)	9
Listening	Can recognize when speakers disagree in a conversation conducted slowly and clearly.	36	A2+ (36–42)	9
Speaking	Can use simple language to describe people’s personality and emotions.	39	A2+ (36–42)	3
Speaking	Can summarize short written passages using the original wording and ordering.	44	B1 (43–50)	10
Speaking	Can give a short talk about a familiar topic, with visual support.	44	B1 (43–50)	11

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## UNIT 2 LINGUISTICS – A Time to Learn

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Signal questions

**PRONUNCIATION** – Rising and falling intonation

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Asking for opinions or ideas; Asking for clarification or confirmation

**PRESENTATION** – Present on learning a language while involving the audience with questions

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can recognize rhetorical questions in a simple presentation or lecture.	59	B2 (59–66)	15
Listening	Can identify key details in a simple recorded dialogue or narrative.	39	A2+ (36–42)	17
Writing	Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	50	B1 (43–50)	16
Speaking	Can describe conclusions they have drawn from a simple presentation or lecture, if guided by questions.	53	B1+ (51–58)	19
Speaking	Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely.	45	B1 (43–50)	19
Speaking	Can paraphrase a simple factual statement related to a familiar topic.	43	B1 (43–50)	20
Speaking	Can ask for more information after a simple lecture or presentation aimed at a general audience, using basic follow-up questions.	48	B1 (43–50)	21
Speaking	Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic.	52	B1+ (51–58)	21

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### UNIT 3 PUBLIC HEALTH – Sleep

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Signal phrases

**PRONUNCIATION** – Signal phrases

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Paraphrasing; Expressing an opinion

**PRESENTATION** – Present on a public health issue, using signal phrases

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can follow the linear structure of a short formal talk.	49	B1 (43–50)	25
Listening	Can follow the main points in a simple audio recording, if provided with written supporting material.	37	A2+ (36–42)	26
Listening	Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly.	47	B1 (43–50)	27
Listening	Can recognize discourse markers that compare and contrast ideas.	53	B1+ (51–58)	28
Speaking	Can paraphrase a simple factual statement related to a familiar topic.	43	B1 (43–50)	29; 30
Speaking	Can express opinions as regards possible solutions, giving brief reasons and explanations.	51	B1+ (51–58)	31
Speaking	Can give a short, rehearsed talk or presentation on a familiar topic.	53	B1+ (51–58)	31
Speaking	Can use basic discourse markers to structure a short presentation.	45	B1 (43–50)	31

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### UNIT 4 BUSINESS – Negotiating for Success

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Lists

**PRONUNCIATION** – Sentence rhythm for lists and contrasting points

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Asking for opinions or ideas; Asking for clarification or confirmation

**PRESENTATION** – Present on negotiation while speaking at a comfortable speed

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can follow the linear structure of a short formal talk.	49	B1 (43–50)	35
Listening	Can recognize cause and effect relationships in a simple presentation or lecture when signaled by discourse markers.	54	B1+ (51–58)	37
Listening	Can recognize that a speaker is clarifying points made in a simple presentation or lecture, if guided by questions.	53	B1+ (51–58)	39
Listening	Can derive the probable meaning of simple, unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	41	A2+ (36–42)	33–35
Speaking	Can suggest a resolution to a conflict in a simple negotiation using fixed expressions.	53	B1+ (51–58)	39
Speaking	Can carry out a prepared structured interview with some spontaneous follow-up questions.	45	B1 (43–50)	40
Speaking	Can ask for more information after a simple lecture or presentation aimed at a general audience, using basic follow-up questions.	48	B1 (43–50)	41
Speaking	Can paraphrase a simple factual statement related to a familiar topic.	43	B1 (43–50)	41

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### UNIT 5 ART HISTORY – Modern Art

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Definitions

**PRONUNCIATION** – Pausing between thought groups

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Disagreeing; Agreeing; Asking for opinions or ideas; Expressing an opinion

**PRESENTATION** – Present on a style of art, using visual aids

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly.	47	B1 (43–50)	47
Listening	Can recognize when speakers agree in a conversation conducted slowly and clearly.	36	A2+ (36–42)	49
Listening	Can recognize when speakers disagree in a conversation conducted slowly and clearly.	36	A2+ (36–42)	49
Listening	Can derive the probable meaning of simple, unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	41	A2+ (36–42)	43–45
Speaking	Can explain what they like or dislike about something.	40	A2+ (36–42)	42
Speaking	Can give straightforward descriptions on a variety of familiar subjects.	47	B1 (43–50)	50
Speaking	Can give a short talk about a familiar topic, with visual support.	44	B1 (43–50)	51
Writing	Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	50	B1 (43–50)	45

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## UNIT 6 ENGINEERING – Robots

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Examples and restatement

**PRONUNCIATION** – Contractions

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Trying to reach a consensus; Offering a fact or example

**PRESENTATION** – Present on a type of robot while persuading the audience and showing enthusiasm

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can recognize discourse markers that introduce supporting examples.	55	B1+ (51–58)	55; 60
Listening	Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly.	47	B1 (43–50)	57
Listening	Can derive the probable meaning of simple, unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	41	A2+ (36–42)	53–55
Speaking	Can effectively participate in a classroom discussion about an academic topic.	54	B1+ (51–58)	59
Speaking	Can signal agreement in a simple negotiation using fixed expressions.	51	B1+ (51–58)	59
Speaking	Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic.	52	B1+ (51–58)	61
Writing	Can take notes on a simple academic text.	50	B1 (43–50)	60

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### UNIT 7 MEDIA STUDIES – Interactive Games

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Evidence and support

**PRONUNCIATION** – Sentence rhythm that signals important ideas

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Asking for clarification or confirmation; Paraphrasing

**PRESENTATION** – Present on media use as a group

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly.	47	B1 (43–50)	65
Listening	Can identify details that support a point of view in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	51	B1+ (51–58)	66
Listening	Can derive the probable meaning of simple, unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	41	A2+ (36–42)	63–64
Listening	Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	48	B1 (43–50)	66–67
Speaking	Can ask for clarification during an academic discussion, using simple language.	54	B1+ (51–58)	69
Speaking	Can contribute to a group discussion if the discussion is conducted slowly and clearly.	49	B1 (43–50)	71
Speaking	Can give a short, rehearsed talk or presentation on a familiar topic.	53	B1+ (51–58)	71
Writing	Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	50	B1 (43–50)	70

## UNIT 8 BIOLOGY – Genetically Modified Food

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Key terms

**PRONUNCIATION** – Linking unstressed words

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Changing the topic; Agreeing; Trying to reach a consensus

**PRESENTATION** – Present on food, comparing and contrasting two types

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can distinguish between main ideas and supporting details in a simple presentation or lecture.	53	B1+ (51–58)	76
Listening	Can generally follow changes of topic in discussions related to their field if conducted slowly and clearly.	49	B1 (43–50)	79
Listening	Can derive the probable meaning of simple, unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	41	A2+ (36–42)	73–74
Listening	Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	48	B1 (43–50)	76–77
Speaking	Can effectively participate in a classroom discussion about an academic topic.	54	B1+ (51–58)	79
Speaking	Can compare and contrast alternatives about what to do, where to go, etc.	53	B1+ (51–58)	81
Speaking	Can use basic discourse markers to structure a short presentation.	45	B1 (43–50)	81
Writing	Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	50	B1 (43–50)	80

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### UNIT 9 BUSINESS – Design Thinking

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Description of a Process

**PRONUNCIATION** – Intonation for finished and unfinished thoughts

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Interrupting politely; Agreeing; Expressing an opinion

**PRESENTATION** – Present on a design problem, using the Design Thinking process and describing the process

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can follow the linear structure of a short formal talk.	49	B1 (43–50)	85
Listening	Can understand the main points of a work-related recorded presentation.	51	B1+ (51–58)	86
Listening	Can derive the probable meaning of simple, unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	41	A2+ (36–42)	83–85
Listening	Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	48	B1 (43–50)	87–88
Speaking	Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely.	45	B1 (43–50)	89
Speaking	Can initiate, maintain and close simple, face-to-face conversations on familiar topics.	46	B1 (43–50)	89
Speaking	Can use basic discourse markers to structure a short presentation.	45	B1 (43–50)	91
Writing	Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	50	B1 (43–50)	90

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### UNIT 10 HISTORY – Shackleton

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Numbers, dates, and periods of time

**PRONUNCIATION** – Linking: *-ed* endings

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Keeping a discussion on topic; Asking for opinions or ideas; Expressing an opinion

**PRESENTATION** – Present on an interesting or important life event, using an object or picture

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can identify a simple chronological sequence in a recorded narrative or dialogue.	43	B1 (43–50)	96
Listening	Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly.	47	B1 (43–50)	97
Listening	Can generally follow changes of topic in discussions related to their field if conducted slowly and clearly.	49	B1 (43–50)	99
Reading	Can follow the chronological sequence of events in an academic text using numbers, times and dates.	56	B1+ (51–58)	95
Speaking	Can contribute to a group discussion if the discussion is conducted slowly and clearly.	49	B1 (43–50)	99
Speaking	Can narrate a story.	45	B1 (43–50)	101
Writing	Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	50	B1 (43–50)	100

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### UNIT 11 PHILOSOPHY – Ethics

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Real-world examples

**PRONUNCIATION** – Pausing that separates ideas

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Offering a fact or example; Expressing an opinion

**PRESENTATION** – Present on an ethical problem and possible decisions, applying one of the ethical approaches and pausing between ideas

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	48	B1 (43–50)	105
Listening	Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly.	47	B1 (43–50)	107
Listening	Can follow the main points of short talks on familiar topics if delivered in clear standard speech.	45	B1 (43–50)	103–104
Reading	Can predict the content of a simple academic text, using headings, images, and captions.	48	B1 (43–50)	106
Speaking	Can use basic discourse markers to structure a short presentation.	45	B1 (43–50)	111
Writing	Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	50	B1 (43–50)	110

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### UNIT 12 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY – Big Data

**NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS** – Personal stories

**PRONUNCIATION** – Sentence rhythm: Repetition

**DISCUSSION STRATEGY** – Keeping a discussion going; Agreeing

**PRESENTATION** – Present on the pros and cons of a type of technology, using an introduction and conclusion

Skill	GSE Learning Objective	GSE	CEFR	Page
Listening	Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly.	47	B1 (43–50)	112
Listening	Can generally identify the topic of discussion around them when conducted slowly and clearly.	39	A2+ (36–42)	115
Listening	Can follow the main points in a simple audio recording aimed at a general audience.	43	B1 (43–50)	116
Listening	Can recognize when a speaker is checking that the listener has understood something in a conversation conducted slowly and clearly.	44	B1 (43–50)	119
Listening	Can recognize when speakers agree in a conversation conducted slowly and clearly.	36	A2+ (36–42)	119
Listening	Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience.	48	B1 (43–50)	116–117
Listening	Can take effective notes while listening to a simple, straightforward presentation or lecture on a familiar topic.	53	B1+ (51–58)	116–117
Reading	Can take basic notes on a text about a familiar topic in their field of study.	48	B1 (43–50)	120
Reading	Can derive the probable meaning of simple unknown words from short, familiar contexts.	46	B1 (43–50)	113–114
Speaking	Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic.	52	B1+ (51–58)	121