

Contemporary Topics

21st 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 21st 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 to learn more about the Global Scale of English.

References

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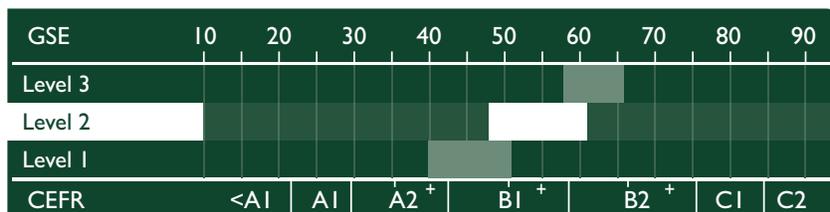
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Contemporary Topics is aligned with the Global Scale of English and the Common European Framework of Reference. **It takes learners from CEFR B1 to B2 (48–61 on the Global Scale of English).** Each lesson guides students to a “Can Do” goal in line 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

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UNIT 1 SOCIOLOGY – Names

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Main ideas

PRONUNCIATION – Syllable stress

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

PRESENTATION – Present on names, using an outline

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|---|-----|-------------|-------|
| Listening | Can understand the main points of narratives and conversations about familiar topics (e.g. work, leisure) delivered in clear standard speech. | 47 | B1 (43–50) | 2 |
| Listening | Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 48 | B1 (43–50) | 7 |
| Reading | Can derive the probable meaning of simple unknown words from short, familiar contexts. | 46 | B1 (43–50) | 3 |
| Speaking | Can ask someone to clarify or elaborate what they have just said. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 9 |
| Speaking | Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic. | 52 | B1+ (51–58) | 11 |
| Writing | Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 5; 10 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 6 |

UNIT 2 LINGUISTICS – Global English

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Comparisons

PRONUNCIATION – Stressing words to focus the listener

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Disagreeing; Agreeing

PRESENTATION – Present on varieties of English, using examples

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|---|-----|-------------|--------|
| Listening | Can understand the main points of narratives and conversations about familiar topics (e.g. work, leisure) delivered in clear standard speech. | 47 | B1 (43–50) | 12 |
| 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) | 15 |
| Listening | Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 48 | B1 (43–50) | 16; 17 |
| Reading | Can derive the probable meaning of simple unknown words from short, familiar contexts. | 46 | B1 (43–50) | 13–14 |
| Speaking | Can enter unprepared into conversation on familiar topics (e.g. family, hobbies, work). | 47 | B1 (43–50) | 12 |
| Speaking | Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely. | 45 | B1 (43–50) | 19 |
| Speaking | Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic. | 52 | B1+ (51–58) | 21 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 16 |
| Writing | Can paraphrase information from a simple text, if guided by questions. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 20 |

UNIT 3 PSYCHOLOGY – Phobias

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Key words

PRONUNCIATION – Contractions

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Keeping a discussion on topic; Asking for clarification or confirmation; Offering a fact or example

PRESENTATION – Present on overcoming a fear, using descriptive sensory details

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|---|-----|-------------|--------|
| Listening | Can understand the main points of narratives and conversations about familiar topics (e.g. work, leisure) delivered in clear standard speech. | 47 | B1 (43–50) | 22 |
| Listening | Can extract the key details from a presentation if delivered slowly and clearly. | 47 | B1 (43–50) | 25 |
| Listening | Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 48 | B1 (43–50) | 26; 27 |
| Reading | Can derive the probable meaning of simple unknown words from short, familiar contexts. | 46 | B1 (43–50) | 23–24 |
| Speaking | Can give detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions. | 49 | B1 (43–50) | 22 |
| Speaking | Can give or seek personal views and opinions in discussing topics of interest. | 46 | B1 (43–50) | 29 |
| Speaking | Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic. | 52 | B1+ (51–58) | 31 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 27 |
| Writing | Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 30 |

UNIT 4 BUSINESS – Success in the Global Economy

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Topics and subtopics

PRONUNCIATION – Reduced vowels

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Trying to reach a consensus; Asking for clarification or confirmation; Paraphrasing

PRESENTATION – Present on a formula for success after developing an introduction

| 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) | 32; 37 |
| Listening | Can follow the main points of short talks on familiar topics if delivered in clear standard speech. | 45 | B1 (43–50) | 35 |
| Reading | Can derive the probable meaning of simple unknown words from short, familiar contexts. | 46 | B1 (43–50) | 33–34 |
| Speaking | Can discuss product features in a business setting using simple language. | 49 | B1 (43–50) | 32 |
| Speaking | Can give simple reasons to justify a viewpoint on a familiar topic. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 39 |
| Speaking | Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic. | 52 | B1+ (51–58) | 41 |
| Writing | Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 35; 40 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 36 |

UNIT 5 EDUCATION – How We Each Learn Best

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Numbered lists

PRONUNCIATION – Final *-s* and *-ed* sounds

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Expressing an opinion; Asking for clarification or confirmation; Offering a fact or example

PRESENTATION – Present on learning strengths, using transitions

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|--|-----|-------------|--------|
| Listening | Can infer speakers' opinions in conversations on familiar everyday topics. | 51 | B1+ (51–58) | 42 |
| Listening | Can extract the meaning of unknown words from context if the topic discussed is familiar. | 57 | B1+ (51–58) | 43 |
| Listening | Can infer opinions in a simple presentation or lecture. | 54 | B1+ (51–58) | 46 |
| Listening | Can identify specific information in a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 48 | B1 (43–50) | 47 |
| Speaking | Can express opinions and attitudes using a range of basic expressions and sentences. | 52 | B1+ (51–58) | 42 |
| Speaking | Can ask someone to clarify or elaborate what they have just said. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 49 |
| Speaking | Can give an effective presentation about a familiar topic. | 52 | B1+ (51–58) | 51 |
| Writing | Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 45 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 46; 50 |

UNIT 6 HISTORY – The Silk Road

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Dates and numbers

PRONUNCIATION – Thought groups

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Paraphrasing; Asking for opinions or ideas; Offering a fact or example

PRESENTATION – Present on an impactful person, using a conclusion

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|--|-----|-------------|--------|
| Listening | Can understand scripted speech delivered quickly, if the accent is familiar. | 61 | B2 (59–66) | 52 |
| Listening | Can extract the meaning of unknown words from context if the topic discussed is familiar. | 57 | B1+ (51–58) | 53 |
| Listening | Can distinguish between main ideas and supporting details in a simple presentation or lecture. | 53 | B1+ (51–58) | 56; 57 |
| Speaking | Can paraphrase in simpler terms what someone else has said. | 60 | B2 (59–66) | 59 |
| Speaking | Can make an effective summary and conclusion to a presentation. | 65 | B2 (59–66) | 61 |
| Writing | Can take notes on a simple presentation or lecture aimed at a general audience. | 50 | B1 (43–50) | 55 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 56; 60 |

UNIT 7 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY – Sports Fans

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Enumerating

PRONUNCIATION – Linked sounds

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

PRESENTATION – Present on a special passion, using an attention-getting opener

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|--|-----|-------------|--------|
| Listening | Can recognize inferred meaning in a simple presentation or lecture. | 59 | B2 (59–66) | 62; 67 |
| Listening | Can extract the meaning of unknown words from context if the topic discussed is familiar. | 57 | B1+ (51–58) | 63 |
| Speaking | Can express support in a manner that shows they were actively listening to the other person. | 58 | B1+ (51–58) | 69 |
| Speaking | Can make an effective introduction and opening to a presentation. | 60 | B2 (59–66) | 71 |
| Writing | Can support ideas with relevant examples. | 59 | B2 (59–66) | 65 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 66 |
| Writing | Can summarize information from a presentation or lecture in their field of specialization. | 65 | B2 (59–66) | 70 |

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UNIT 8 ARCHITECTURE – Frank Gehry

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Emphasis

PRONUNCIATION – Intonation

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Acknowledging a point; Asking for opinions or ideas; Disagreeing

PRESENTATION – Present on a beautiful building, using visual aids

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|---|-----|-------------|--------|
| Listening | Can extract the meaning of unknown words from context if the topic discussed is familiar. | 57 | B1+ (51–58) | 73 |
| Listening | Can recognize emphasis through intonation and stress. | 61 | B2 (59–66) | 75 |
| Listening | Can recognize inferred meaning in a simple presentation or lecture. | 59 | B2 (59–66) | 77 |
| Speaking | Can summarize and give opinions on issues and stories and answer questions in detail. | 56 | B1+ (51–58) | 72 |
| Speaking | Can express disagreement in a manner that shows they were actively listening to the other person. | 58 | B1+ (51–58) | 79 |
| Speaking | Can use appropriate linking expressions to signal transitions within a presentation. | 58 | B1+ (51–58) | 81 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 76; 80 |

UNIT 9 PUBLIC HEALTH – Global Epidemic

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Symbols and abbreviations

PRONUNCIATION – Emphasized words

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Offering a fact or example; Asking for opinions or ideas; Paraphrasing

PRESENTATION – Present on healthy changes, using nonverbal communication

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|---|-----|-------------|--------|
| Listening | Can recognize inferred meaning in a simple presentation or lecture. | 59 | B2 (59–66) | 82 |
| Listening | Can extract the meaning of unknown words from context if the topic discussed is familiar. | 57 | B1+ (51–58) | 83 |
| Listening | Can recognize the speaker’s point of view in a structured presentation. | 63 | B2 (59–66) | 87 |
| Speaking | Can summarize and give opinions on issues and stories and answer questions in detail. | 56 | B1+ (51–58) | 82 |
| Speaking | Can develop a clear argument with supporting subsidiary points and relevant examples. | 66 | B2 (59–66) | 89 |
| Speaking | Can use appropriate linking expressions to signal transitions within a presentation. | 58 | B1+ (51–58) | 91 |
| Writing | Can employ simple time-saving strategies when taking notes (leaving out words, abbreviations etc.). | 63 | B2 (59–66) | 85 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 86; 90 |

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UNIT 10 URBAN PLANNING – 21st Century Cities

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Connected ideas

PRONUNCIATION – Reduced and contracted words

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Focusing on a topic; Asking for clarification or confirmation; Expressing an opinion

PRESENTATION – Present on a great place to live while persuading the audience

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|---|-----|-------------|------|
| Listening | Can recognize inferred meaning in a simple presentation or lecture. | 59 | B2 (59–66) | 92 |
| Listening | Can recognize the speaker’s point of view in a structured presentation. | 63 | B2 (59–66) | 97 |
| Speaking | Can summarize and give opinions on issues and stories and answer questions in detail. | 56 | B1+ (51–58) | 92 |
| Speaking | Can ask for clarification during an academic discussion, using simple language. | 54 | B1+ (51–58) | 99 |
| Speaking | Can justify and sustain views clearly by providing relevant explanations and arguments. | 60 | B2 (59–66) | 101 |
| Writing | Can signal cause and effect relationships when writing an academic text by using discourse markers. | 65 | B2 (59–66) | 95 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 96 |
| Writing | Can support a main idea with examples and reasons. | 57 | B1+ (51–58) | 100 |

UNIT 11 BIOLOGY – DNA Testing

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Graphic organizers

PRONUNCIATION – Stressing words to make ideas clear

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Getting a discussion started; Disagreeing; Expressing an opinion

PRESENTATION – Present on a scientific advance, using quotations

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|--|-----|-------------|------|
| Listening | Can recognize inferred meaning in a simple presentation or lecture. | 59 | B2 (59–66) | 102 |
| Listening | Can understand main points and check comprehension by using contextual clues. | 64 | B2 (59–66) | 107 |
| Speaking | Can manage discussion on familiar topics confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc. | 65 | B2 (59–66) | 109 |
| Speaking | Can develop a clear argument with supporting subsidiary points and relevant examples. | 66 | B2 (59–66) | 111 |
| Writing | Can describe the sequence in a process when writing a simple text, using common discourse markers. | 47 | B1 (43–50) | 105 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 106 |
| Writing | Can write a detailed description of a simple process. | 58 | B1+ (51–58) | 110 |

UNIT 12 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – Risk Management

NOTE-TAKING AND LISTENING FOCUS – Questions

PRONUNCIATION – Key words in thought groups

DISCUSSION STRATEGY – Asking for opinions or ideas; Agreeing; Offering a fact or example

PRESENTATION – Present on a survivor’s story and answer audience questions

| Skill | GSE Learning Objective | GSE | CEFR | Page |
|-----------|---|-----|-------------|---------|
| Listening | Can understand main points and check comprehension by using contextual clues. | 64 | B2 (59–66) | 116–117 |
| Speaking | Can speculate about causes, consequences, and hypothetical situations. | 64 | B2 (59–66) | 112 |
| Speaking | Can manage discussion on familiar topics confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc. | 65 | B2 (59–66) | 119 |
| Speaking | Can develop a clear argument with supporting subsidiary points and relevant examples. | 66 | B2 (59–66) | 121 |
| Writing | Can take notes of key points during a talk on a familiar topic, if delivered clearly. | 55 | B1+ (51–58) | 115 |
| Writing | Can write bullet points to summarize key points in an academic text. | 66 | B2 (59–66) | 120 |