



English Skills for University 2A Coursebook/Workbook

Terry Phillips and Anna Phillips
Garnet Education, 2011
ISBN 978 85964 645 8

English Skills for University is a combined course - book/workbook aimed at pre-intermediate learners at an A2 CEFR level or band 3 IELTS.

This is the highest in a two-book series. At first glance, it looks like most other EAP textbooks and has the requisite accompanying CDs, teacher's book and transcripts. What makes this text different from similar texts are its topics and extra focus on pronunciation and spelling.

English Skills for University is split into five units: Education, Daily Life, Work and Business, Science and Nature and The Physical World. There is the usual breakdown of the four skills and then sections for vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar patterns. The five units, and review unit, are further separated into five distinct lessons. Key vocabulary is identified on the first page of each unit and a set of learning objectives ends each unit to assist learners in quantifying what they have learned.

In the first unit, the reading lesson is on how students can make each lesson count. This is a wonderful topic to start with as it helps the learners identify reading strategies they will need in future texts. The next lesson focuses on the pronunciation of vowel sounds and article usage, both of which are incredibly useful to learn at the beginning of English lessons. In unit five, prepositions of place are identified in linear terms, followed by a reading about geography and a writing lesson on distances and size. The listening follows naturally with information about the solar system and planets and distances. The layout is incredibly practical and the topics are relevant for students hoping to study in an English speaking university.

The pages are colourful, pictures are current and the layout is consistent. Three CDs accompany the coursebook, which provide the learner with plenty of opportunity for listening and pronunciation work.

I especially like the last page of each unit which includes boxes labelled 'Transfer' and 'Reflect'. The questions in the 'Reflect' box ask students to think about the topics introduced and to decide what is most interesting to them and why. These would be excellent journal topics for students to write about and would provide extra opportunities for them to use new vocabulary and grammar.

It's good to see lower level books with practical, adult topics which can help to motivate learners who have a long road of learning ahead of them.

Sandee Thompson
CELTA tutor/IELTS Examiner Trainer
sandee_t@yahoo.com



Study Skills Success (North American English) 6.5

Clarity Language Consultants Ltd.
www.clarityenglish.com

'Effective, easy to use, enjoyable' is how Clarity explains their online programmes and I couldn't agree more. Study Skills

Success V9 Preparing to Study in English is an online academic study skills course that is organised in a clear and fun-looking manner. There are ten sections: Introduction, Reading, Listening, Writing, Speaking, Research, Critical Thinking, Vocabulary, Grammar, Describing Visuals and Independent Learning. Each section or chapter is broken into approximately fourteen lessons with a clearly spoken 'What will I learn' video to prepare students before they begin. The syllabus also provides a learning focus for each section.

There are icons neatly lined up on the left side of each page. Learning Objective, Progress (where students monitor their progress—scores and recorded time to complete each task), Notepad (where students can easily take notes), Print, and Recorder. The Recorder is specifically beneficial in the speaking section. One discussion topic asks students to describe a book they like, how it affected their life, when they read it etc. Students record their discussion and also listen to two speakers discussing the same topics.

Each section is thoroughly interactive. I admit I was a bit apprehensive about reviewing an online programme because of the complexity of many other similar sites, and I like to have a book in my hand. However, I was happily surprised by the efficient ease of using Study Skills Success. It was non-fussy, highly effective, included current topics and pictures and support for students. The blue and black text was particularly beneficial for visual learners with important words or sections, such as modal verbs, highlighted in the blue.

Because students are techno savvy, many prefer online interactive activities to text books, and this is an excellent supplement to any academic English course. By the time students reach the level of English necessary for Study Skills Success, they already know what modal verbs are. However, the modal verb lesson (in the Grammar chapter) is a reminder of how modal verbs are used in academic texts.

If I were grading Study Skills Success, I'd give it an A+, and would recommend its use as an integral part of any mid to upper level academic English class assigning sections for students' self-study. Study Skills Success is pedagogically sound and, yes, online English lessons can be 'effective, easy to use and enjoyable'.

Colleen Swinemar
swinemar.colleen@gmail.com

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