

SECOND EDITION

ON POINT 2

READING AND
CRITICAL-THINKING
SKILLS

On Point is a three-volume series that teaches upper-intermediate and advanced learners of English to analyze, critically evaluate, and intelligently respond to texts. Each unit centers on a high-interest topic and guides learners through engaging discussions and activities.

The series builds learners' cross-disciplinary academic vocabulary. Focus vocabulary for each reading passage is chosen from the Academic Word List (AWL). Created by Averil Coxhead, this list of 570 words is commonly used in written academic English across various fields.

THE SECOND EDITION INCLUDES:

- ❏ New and updated readings on important current topics from a variety of academic subjects
- ❏ Reading comprehension exercises designed to hone comprehension skills
- ❏ Preview and review exercises to reinforce the Academic Word List (AWL) vocabulary words encountered in the readings
- ❏ Activities to hone reading comprehension skills and encourage critical thinking
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SECOND EDITION

ON POINT 2

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2

READING AND
CRITICAL-THINKING
SKILLS

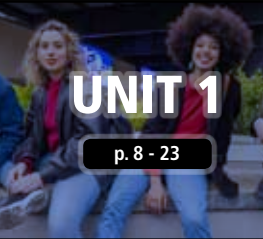
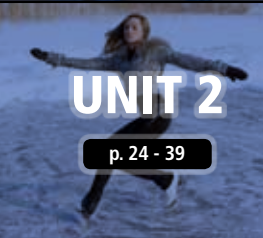
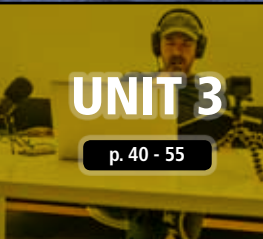
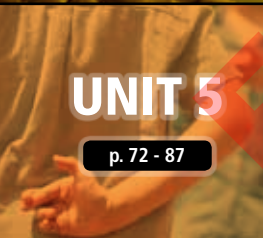
TABLE OF CONTENTS

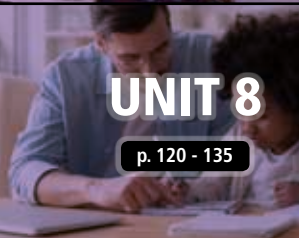
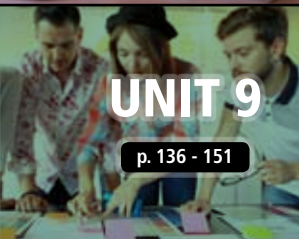
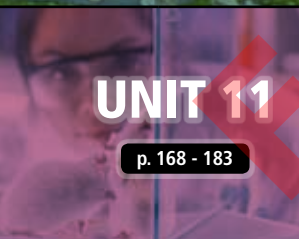
TABLE OF CONTENTS

p. 2 - 3

HOW TO USE

p. 4 - 7

		Reading Skills	Critical-Thinking Skills
	PSYCHOLOGY		
UNIT 1 p. 8 - 23	Lesson 1 Caring about What Others Think	Making Connections	Detecting Arguments
	Lesson 2 Don't Go Along to Get Along		
	SPORTS		
UNIT 2 p. 24 - 39	Lesson 1 Sport or Art?	Setting a Purpose for Reading	Detecting the Author's Purpose
	Lesson 2 For Fame and Fortune?		
	MASS MEDIA		
UNIT 3 p. 40 - 55	Lesson 1 I Want to Be a Content Creator	Making Predictions	Detecting Persuasive Language
	Lesson 2 Media Coverage of Stars		
	CHILD PSYCHOLOGY		
UNIT 4 p. 56 - 71	Lesson 1 Learning by Living	Distinguishing Facts and Opinions	Identifying Assumptions
	Lesson 2 Modern Intensive Parenting		
	PHILOSOPHY		
UNIT 5 p. 72 - 87	Lesson 1 The Value of Lies	Asking Questions While Reading	Understanding Key Terms
	Lesson 2 Liar, Liar		
	SCIENCE		
UNIT 6 p. 88 - 103	Lesson 1 Why Explore Space?	Making Inferences	Distinguishing Overgeneralizations
	Lesson 2 Red Planet Risks		

		Reading Skills	Critical-Thinking Skills	
 UNIT 7 p. 104 - 119	CAREERS			
	Lesson 1	What Do Gen Z Workers Want?	Determining Main Ideas and Details	Detecting Irrelevant Points
	Lesson 2	How to Be an Attractive Employee		
 UNIT 8 p. 120 - 135	EDUCATION			
	Lesson 1	Thinking Twice about Schools	Summarizing	Identifying Premises and Conclusions
	Lesson 2	Homeschooled Kids Miss Out		
 UNIT 9 p. 136 - 151	PSYCHOLOGY			
	Lesson 1	Creative People Are Different	Identifying the Author's Point of View	Considering Objections
	Lesson 2	Are Geniuses Normal?		
 UNIT 10 p. 152 - 167	SOCIOLOGY			
	Lesson 1	An Aging World	Drawing Conclusions	Finding Fallacies
	Lesson 2	Demographic Destiny		
 UNIT 11 p. 168 - 183	SCIENCE			
	Lesson 1	First Line of Defense	Extracting and Recalling Information	Classifying Statements
	Lesson 2	A Case against Animal Testing		
 UNIT 12 p. 184 - 199	ENVIRONMENT			
	Lesson 1	Buy Locally?	Understanding Cause and Effect	Identifying Cause and Effect
	Lesson 2	The Case for Local Food		

VOCABULARY

p. 200



LESSON 1

— SKILLS

Reading Skill:
Making Connections

Critical-Thinking Skill:
Detecting Arguments

CARING ABOUT WHAT OTHERS THINK

— WARM-UP

1. What kinds of situations might make people feel awkward or embarrassed?
2. What do you do to feel less awkward or embarrassed in new situations?

BEFORE YOU READ

Read the statements. Check (✓) whether you agree or disagree with each statement. Discuss your answers with a partner.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
1. I always do my best to appear good in public.				
2. I like to follow trends that my friends are following.				
3. I do everything I can to avoid embarrassment.				
4. I talk to different people in different ways.				
5. I care less now about what people think of me than I used to.				

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Read the sentences. Circle the words closest in meaning to the words in bold.

- Did the writer think about what would happen if everyone **ceased** to care about what others think?
a. stopped b. attempted c. imagined
- Many **psychologists** believe that humans developed emotions in order to survive.
a. patients b. scientists c. surgeons
- If we **deviate** from social conventions too often, we might end up unpopular and alone.
a. discuss b. lie c. differ
- You make an embarrassing mistake; **subsequently**, you try to avoid repeating it.
a. luckily b. later c. seemingly
- If we don't care about what others think of us, we don't **adapt** our personalities and grow.
a. alter b. keep c. trust
- We present a certain **image** of ourselves around others that shows we care about their expectations.
a. argument b. value c. idea
- The way we talk and behave **functions** to show others that we care about their opinion.
a. allows b. drives c. works
- As **intelligent** creatures, we care about what others think of us.
a. smart b. friendly c. emotional

CARING ABOUT WHAT OTHERS THINK



Practice the skills while reading.

READING SKILL

Making Connections

You can better understand a reading if you connect it with things you already know. A **text-to-text** connection relates the passage to another text. A **text-to-self** connection relates the passage to yourself. A **text-to-world** connection relates the passage to your knowledge.

CRITICAL-THINKING SKILL

Detecting Arguments

An argument is an attempt to prove that something is true. To find an argument, you must identify the premises and the conclusion that follows.



Read paragraph 1. Have you ever heard advice similar to this? What was it?

Today, many self-help books claim to have the recipe for healthy, wealthy, and wise living; one of their most frequent suggestions is “be yourself.” As Roy T. Bennett’s *The Light in the Heart* advises, readers should “stop caring about what others think.” As with many **clichés**¹, there may be some wisdom behind Bennett’s advice. Certainly, worrying
5 too much about others’ opinions can be stressful and leave us feeling doubtful and depressed, but have writers like Bennett considered the effects of everyone on earth **ceasing** to care about how they are perceived?



Read paragraph 2 and underline the sentence that describes a social convention being broken.

Emotions such as embarrassment and **shame**² are usually the result of feeling as though we’ve made a mistake in the eyes of others—they don’t feel good, but they serve an
10 important purpose. Imagine you are walking to the supermarket check-out. You are not paying attention and accidentally cut in front of someone in line. Another customer points out your mistake, and you head to the back of the line. How do you feel? Slightly embarrassed, maybe? This is because you have broken a social convention: these are the small, everyday codes and rules that we live by, and they are essential to the smooth
15 running of societies.

Embarrassment and shame prove that humans **instinctively**³ care about what people think of them. But why should this be? Cutting in line would be helpful for us, right? Well, while emotions such as embarrassment help maintain a healthy society, many **psychologists** argue that humans actually developed them for
20 **self-preservation**⁴. Suppose we **deviate** from social conventions too often. In that case, we may soon find ourselves alone, without friends, and on the margins of our society—something we instinctively know would not benefit us as individuals.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--|
| ¹ cliché | <i>n.</i> | a saying or remark that is often made and is therefore not original or interesting |
| ² shame | <i>n.</i> | an uncomfortable feeling of guilt caused by someone’s bad behavior |
| ³ instinctively | <i>adv.</i> | in a way that is not thought about, planned, or developed by training |
| ⁴ self-preservation | <i>n.</i> | behavior based on feelings that warn people to protect themselves |

Read paragraph 4. Think of a time when you were embarrassed. What did you learn from the experience?



Read paragraph 5. Describe how you talk to people differently, using specific examples.



Also, without these painfully memorable emotions, we are likely to repeat our mistakes. We can illustrate the personal learning value of embarrassment more clearly with another example. Let's imagine you've now left the supermarket. You didn't remember to bring a bag, so you are struggling to hold many loose apples, oranges, and bananas. Suddenly, you lose your grip, your precious fruit rolls all over the busy street, and you are left desperately chasing after it. If you are feeling embarrassed again, as might be expected, then **subsequently**, you'll probably remember to bring a shopping bag to get your food home safely.

"Not caring about what others think" suggests that whatever the situation, we should not change or **adapt** our personalities—instead, as the saying goes, we should "be true to ourselves." In English, the idea of being "two-faced" is extremely negative and is used to describe people who are **deceptive**⁵ or false. Of course, most of us know it's usually not healthy—or even helpful—to lie or **consciously**⁶ pretend to be someone else. However, is it such a bad thing to have more than one "face"? For example, most of us would naturally find ourselves talking very differently to our ten-year-old niece, eighty-year-old grandmother, boss, and best friend. The **image** we present around others **functions** as a sign that we are thinking about their expectations, and the adaptations we make are signs of empathy—they show that we have considered others' thoughts, needs, and feelings.



In fact, there is a saying that we have *three* distinct faces: one for the world, one for our families, and one for ourselves. This seems quite realistic; however, it might also suggest that the last of these faces is the true or "real" one. Can we really say that we are most honestly ourselves when we are alone? Most psychologists argue that we are just as capable of lying to ourselves as we are to others, so perhaps it's other people's opinions of us that "keep us honest."

As with many things in life, the truth probably lies somewhere in between. Worrying too much about how we are seen could be a waste of time—or even dangerous, especially if it is based on shallow **judgments**⁷ about what we wear or how we look. On the other hand, being concerned about how others view us as **intelligent**, emotional creatures is essential to our well-being and the success of our communities.



When we fall over, the first thing we do is look to see if anyone has noticed. This shows that we cannot choose whether we care about how other people see us—it's an instinctive response.

⁵ **deceptive** *adj.* making someone believe something that is not true
⁶ **consciously** *adv.* in a way that is determined and intentional
⁷ **judgment** *n.* a decision or opinion about someone or something

1 Choose the best answer.

SEARCHING
FOR DETAILS

1. According to paragraph 1, all of the following are true of self-help books EXCEPT _____.
 - a. they advise readers not to worry about others' opinions
 - b. they claim they can make you rich, well, and wise
 - c. they can make us feel unsure and lead to sadness
 - d. they often repeat ideas that are not original or helpful
2. According to paragraph 2, why might shame be useful to society?
 - a. Because it stops people from trying to do dangerous things
 - b. Because the economy relies on us doing as we are told
 - c. Because supermarkets are busy and need order to operate
 - d. Because everyone benefits when people maintain the rules
3. According to paragraph 4, why might embarrassment be useful to individuals?
 - a. Because it lets other people know that they care
 - b. Because it helps us remember mistakes we have made
 - c. Because we would treat each other badly without it
 - d. Because it stops us from being too arrogant
4. According to paragraph 5, which of the following is NOT true?
 - a. We communicate with different people in different ways.
 - b. People think that behaving differently around others is dishonest.
 - c. Being described as "two-faced" is a compliment.
 - d. When we change our behavior, it shows we care about others.
5. According to paragraph 6, what is the problem with the saying?
 - a. It implies we are only ourselves when no one else is there.
 - b. It assumes that people everywhere are the same.
 - c. It suggests each of us are three different people.
 - d. It is not relevant because it comes from a different time.

2 Choose the best answer.

UNDERSTANDING CONTENT

1. In line 14, the word *smooth* is closest in meaning to _____.
 - a. flat
 - b. stable
 - c. gentle
 - d. dull
2. Which statement best restates the highlighted sentence in the passage?
 - a. Worrying about the clothes we wear is natural because we need them.
 - b. Caring about what people think is unavoidable, so we need to accept it.
 - c. Being concerned about what people think is something we grow out of.
 - d. Stressing over one's appearance can be a waste of time and even harmful.

IDENTIFYING PURPOSE

3. In paragraph 2, why does the author ask, "How do you feel?"
 - a. To make the reader imagine someone offending them
 - b. To question what people become embarrassed about
 - c. To force the reader to imagine breaking an unofficial rule
 - d. To show the reader that they care about their feelings

UNDERSTANDING REFERENCES

4. In line 44, the phrase *the last of these faces* refers to _____.
 - a. the face for our friends
 - b. our family face
 - c. the face for ourselves
 - d. our true face

INFERRING INFORMATION

5. What can be inferred from paragraph 5?
 - a. People who don't change their behavior are dishonest.
 - b. People who expect others to change are unreasonable.
 - c. People who treat others differently are not successful.
 - d. People who always act the same way lack empathy.

MAPPING IDEAS

Read the sentences about the passage. Which phrases best complete the sentences according to the given types of connections? Circle the correct letters.

1. **Text-to-text:** The mention of worrying about other peoples' opinions too much made me think about . . .
 - a. an article I read about online bullying and how it can affect young people.
 - b. a friend who is always stressed about their appearance.
2. **Text-to-self:** The example of the shopping bag made me think of . . .
 - a. how difficult it must be to work at a grocery store.
 - b. the time when I tripped and fell while looking at my phone.
3. **Text-to-self:** The topic of having more than one face made me think of . . .
 - a. how it is difficult for many people to make good friends.
 - b. the last time I saw my grandparents and how I talked to them.
4. **Text-to-world:** The mention of shallow judgments made me think of . . .
 - a. how people place value on designer labels and the latest trends.
 - b. an article on the latest changes in the fashion industry.

Now make your own connections.

1. **Text-to-text:** The mention of worrying about other people's opinions too much made me think about . . .

2. **Text-to-self:** The example of the shopping bag made me think of . . .

3. **Text-to-world:** The mention of shallow judgments made me think of . . .

VOCABULARY REVIEW

Fill in the blanks with the correct words from the box. Change the form if needed.

cease
function

psychologist
intelligent

deviate
shame

adapt
judgment

1. Jake wants to be a(n) _____ because he is interested in the human mind.
2. Those who _____ seriously from rules and laws may find themselves in prison.
3. We should try and get to know people before passing _____ on them.
4. The factory will _____ operations this Friday for a national holiday.
5. Road signs _____ as a way to keep traffic under control.
6. You shouldn't feel _____ when you fail at something despite trying your best.
7. Kyle is extremely _____, so other students often ask him for help.
8. When children change schools, it can sometimes be difficult for them to _____.

CRITICAL-THINKING SKILL

Detecting Arguments

An argument is an attempt to prove that something is true. Simple arguments use one or more statements (called premises) to build a conclusion. For example:

- (1) Research shows that people who exercise daily have a lower risk of heart disease.
- (2) I want to reduce my risk of heart disease.
- (3) Therefore, I should exercise daily.

1 Read the excerpt. Evaluate it with a partner and answer the question.

Imagine you are walking to the supermarket check-out. You are not paying attention and accidentally cut in front of someone in line. Another customer points out your mistake, and you head to the back of the line. How do you feel? Slightly embarrassed, maybe? This is because you have broken a social convention: these are the small, everyday codes and rules that we live by, and they are essential to the smooth running of societies.

DETECTING ARGUMENTS

Based on the information in the excerpt, circle the most logical conclusion that could be drawn.

- a. Caring about what others think is important because it makes us unique.
- b. Humans are selfish and don't care what others think, but they want to seem honest.
- c. Embarrassment is necessary to ensure that people follow social conventions.
- d. Rules like going to the back of the line exist to make us feel embarrassed.

2 Write a short summary that includes two or three premises that support the conclusion you circled.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Talk about the questions with a partner.

1. How would you like people to think of you—as clever, beautiful, caring, etc.? Why?
2. What kinds of embarrassing situations can be educational, and which might just be painful?
3. How much should people care about what others think of them?

SHARING YOUR OPINION

Write a paragraph about how you hope that others perceive you and why this might be important to you.

