

SECOND EDITION

ON POINT 3

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
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SECOND EDITION

ON POINT 3

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C1+

SECOND EDITION

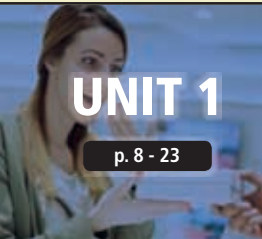
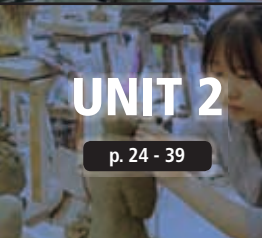
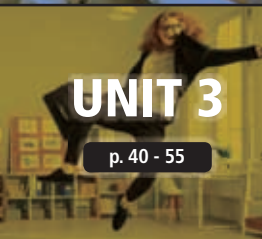
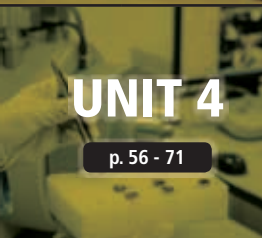
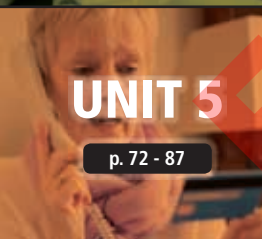
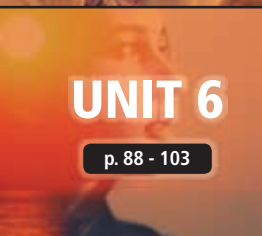
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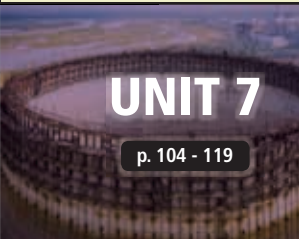
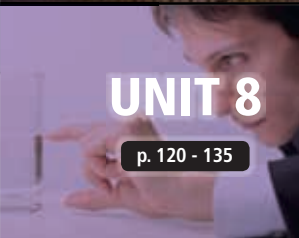
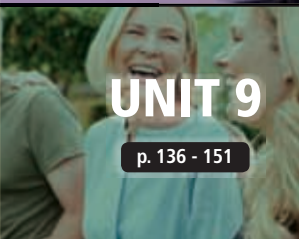
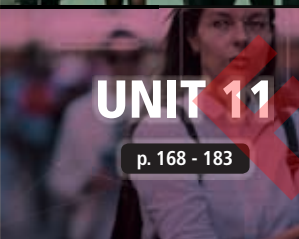
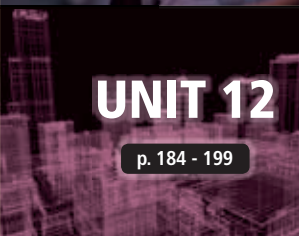
READING AND
CRITICAL-THINKING
SKILLS

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LESSON 1

— SKILLS

Reading Skill:
Making Predictions

Critical-Thinking Skill:
Detecting Arguments

EARLY ADOPTERS FALL INTO A COSTLY TRAP

— WARM-UP

1. Do you think it is worth it to buy the latest technologies when they are released? Why or why not?
2. What are some things you consider when buying a new device?

BEFORE YOU READ

Rank the features you consider when purchasing a new product from 1 (most important to you) to 6 (least important to you). Discuss your rankings with a partner.

- _____ Design
- _____ Brand
- _____ Exclusivity (limited edition, etc.)
- _____ New features
- _____ Cost
- _____ Available accessories

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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

1. People **underestimate** the cost of buying a new device.
a. underappreciate b. overrate c. undervalue
2. Stay away from any technology that is in **uncharted** territory.
a. unsafe b. unexplored c. unavailable
3. Not buying the latest products saves you from devices that could **erode** your privacy or are doomed to fail.
a. neglect b. destroy c. ignore
4. In the early 2000s, there were two **options** for high-definition video players.
a. preferences b. opportunities c. alternatives
5. Buyers remained **neutral** and chose not to buy either product until much later.
a. positive b. uncommitted c. consistent
6. The **implications** of voice recognition technology in terms of privacy are not yet clear.
a. consequences b. errors c. presumptions
7. The **tension** between consumers and tech companies is high.
a. strain b. demand c. restraint
8. Early adopters often buy expensive gadgets with technology that has not **matured** yet.
a. developed b. experienced c. functioned

EARLY ADOPTERS FALL INTO A COSTLY TRAP



Practice the skills while reading.

READING SKILL

Making Predictions

Readers can make predictions about a text by looking for clues in the title, the introduction paragraph, and the first and last sentences in a paragraph.

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 the title and paragraph 1 and circle what you think the passage will be about.

- a. Early adopters are wasting their money on bad products.
- b. Early adopters make things expensive for everyone.



Read paragraphs 2 and 3 and underline the part that explains how tech companies make money from early adopters.

- It's undeniable: being among the first to try out a new piece of technology is cool. When you're the sole member of your social circle with the latest hot **gadget**¹, people stare in fascination, seeing you as the holder of powerful and secret knowledge—at least until the next big thing comes along. People tend to **underestimate** the costs of this temporary coolness, which they end up paying for in more ways than one. So take it from me and don't fall into the early adopter trap by joining the first wave of consumers who invest in the latest **uncharted** territory in technology. Instead, if you just wait and see, you will save money and avoid being stuck with **defective**², possibly **doomed**³ technology that could even **erode** your privacy.
- Early adoption is a bad investment, to put it **bluntly**⁴. First, the earliest versions of products are not only expensive, they are the most expensive that those devices will ever be. Companies presumably charge more to recover the cost of development and production as fast as possible, and they know that there are serious tech-lovers who will pay a great deal to be early adopters. Once the revenues from early adopters' purchases are safely in their hands, they can cut the price and shift to the next marketing phase: selling the product to everyone else. This tactic is why the cost of the original iPhone dropped about \$200 only eight months after its release. Prices of gadgets most often fall shortly after release, and they are likely to continue falling. For instance, many new TV models drop significantly in price as little as ten days after hitting the market. Furthermore, electronics rapidly **depreciate**⁵ because they become **obsolete**⁶ so quickly; the resale price of a used cell phone or laptop can drop by fifty percent within just a few months.

- ¹ **gadget** *n.* a device; a useful machine
- ² **defective** *adj.* not working properly
- ³ **doomed** *adj.* facing certain failure or death
- ⁴ **bluntly** *adv.* briefly and directly
- ⁵ **depreciate** *v.* to become lower in value
- ⁶ **obsolete** *adj.* outdated and no longer in use

Those who are first to leap into a new technology not only risk wasting money, they might also lose time on something that will never catch on with the general public.

25 In 2006, two competing **options** for high-definition video entered the market: HD DVDs and Blu-ray discs. Both seemed promising, and both required special devices called players, costing hundreds of US dollars. Cautious consumers decided to stay **neutral**, realizing that one or the other would probably end up dominating, and refrained from buying either product. But a few eager consumers **took a gamble**⁷, and those who
30 regrettably bought an HD DVD player quickly found themselves stuck with a virtually worthless machine. In the struggle for high-definition video dominance, Blu-ray was much more technologically advanced than HD DVD and could store up to seven times the amount of information. Sales dropped steadily for HD DVD players, and by early 2008, support for the product was discontinued entirely. Many new products face a similar fate;
35 early adopters are then stuck with pricey gadgets that do nothing but sit on their shelves **collecting dust**⁸.

Even worse, your new device might have functions that you don't know about and would likely not approve of if you did. In 2013, Amazon Echo introduced the world to a digital assistant named Alexa, who is supposed to become active only when you say
40 "her" name. However, voice-recognition technology is still imperfect. These devices often activate without users' permission and record what they hear (though this fact is not acknowledged in the packaging or marketing). The privacy **implications** remain unclear but are causing **tension** between developers and consumers. As tech reporter Adam Estes told the *Guardian* in 2019 in a discussion of digital assistants, "I hate to be dramatic, but I
45 don't think we're ever going to feel safe from their data-collection practices."

Early adopters do something most others are reluctant to do: buy overpriced technology before it has **matured** for the **dubious**⁹ rewards of being the first and enjoying a short-term increase in status. These **trailblazers**¹⁰ help the rest of us through their willingness to spend the extra money and work out the problems with a new product.
50 So if you know any early adopters, thank them, and then congratulate yourself on not being one of them.

Read paragraph 4 and think of reasons why a product like Alexa could be dangerous.



Read paragraph 5 and then circle the statement the author would agree with most.



- a. There are no benefits to being an early adopter.
- b. Early adopters help companies improve their products.



⁷ **take a gamble**

idiom to take a risk

⁸ **collect dust**

idiom to remain unused

⁹ **dubious**

adj. of doubtful worth or quality

¹⁰ **trailblazer**

n. someone who does something new that others follow; a pioneer

FOCUS ON CONTENT

1 Choose the best answer.

SEARCHING
FOR DETAILS

1. According to paragraph 1, what advantage do early adopters have?
 - a. They enjoy extra privileges from the company that makes the product.
 - b. They have reduced privacy concerns because of newer technologies.
 - c. They don't end up with defective devices or doomed products.
 - d. They gain the attention of others within their social circle.
2. According to paragraph 2, what is true about newly released devices?
 - a. They are poorly designed.
 - b. They quickly decline in price.
 - c. They are marketed to everyone.
 - d. They bring in very little revenue.
3. According to paragraph 3, why did Blu-ray succeed over HD DVDs?
 - a. It was more user-friendly.
 - b. It was less expensive.
 - c. It had more storage space.
 - d. It sold to more early adopters.
4. According to paragraph 3, which is NOT true of Blu-ray and HD DVD?
 - a. Blu-ray and HD DVD appeared in the same year.
 - b. The two types of disc required different players.
 - c. Both types of disc offered high-quality video.
 - d. There are still several Blu-ray and HD DVD makers.
5. According to paragraph 4, what is true about the tech reporter Adam Estes?
 - a. He believes the tension between developers and consumers will persist.
 - b. He thinks people are being too dramatic in regard to their privacy concerns.
 - c. He believes voice-recognition technology will improve and prevent privacy leaks.
 - d. He thinks that digital assistants' functions must be limited to maintain users' privacy.

2 Choose the best answer.

UNDERSTANDING CONTENT

1. Which statement best restates the highlighted sentence in the passage?
- a. Early adopters leap into new technologies that the general public typically cannot afford.
 - b. Early adopters enjoy new products for longer because the general public is slow to adopt.
 - c. Early adopters may waste money and time on products that won't be around very long.
 - d. Early adopters invest a lot of time and money in new products for limited benefits.
2. In line 44, the word *dramatic* is closest in meaning to _____.
- a. exaggerated
 - b. considerable
 - c. artificial
 - d. thrilling

IDENTIFYING PURPOSE

3. In paragraph 2, why does the author mention that iPhone dropped in price eight months after launching?
- a. To demonstrate the bargains that early adopters can get
 - b. To show that device prices take a long time to go down
 - c. To show how early adopters waste money by buying early
 - d. To explain why the first iPhone was so popular at the time

UNDERSTANDING REFERENCES

4. In line 15, the word *they* refers to _____.
- a. tech-lovers
 - b. companies
 - c. revenues
 - d. purchases

INFERRING INFORMATION

5. What can be inferred about early adopters from paragraph 5?
- a. They take pride in buying overpriced goods because it's helpful to others.
 - b. They see themselves as experts in technology and with new devices.
 - c. They enjoy the status given to early adopters more than the product.
 - d. They are more likely to make risky purchasing decisions than others.

MAPPING IDEAS

Read the outline and match the best predictions about the contents of the paragraphs to complete the graphic organizer.

EARLY ADOPTERS FALL INTO A COSTLY TRAP		
	TOPIC SENTENCES	PREDICTIONS
Paragraph 1	People tend to underestimate the costs of [early adoption's] temporary coolness, which they end up paying for in more ways than one.	1. _____
Paragraph 2	Early adoption is a bad investment, to put it bluntly.	2. _____
Paragraph 3	Those who are first to leap into a new technology not only risk wasting money, they might also lose time on something that will never catch on with the general public.	3. _____
Paragraph 4	Even worse, your new device might have functions that you don't know about and would likely not approve of if you did.	4. _____
Conclusion: Early adopters do something most others are reluctant to do: take on overpriced technology before it has matured, for the dubious rewards of being the first and enjoying a short-term increase in status.		
PREDICTIONS		
a. The author will describe how companies access personal information without permission. b. The author will describe how buying early can mean wasting money on bad products. c. The author will describe a product that ended up collecting dust on a shelf. d. The author will describe people's reasons for early adoption and its flaws.		

VOCABULARY REVIEW

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

erode	implication	mature	bluntly
neutral	tension	obsolete	underestimate

- The restaurant ran out of food because they _____ how many customers would show up.
- When strangers are forced together, it's normal for some _____ to develop.
- Telling lies _____ trust between friends, which may take time to rebuild.
- Even though it became _____ decades ago, Janine still likes her old typewriter.
- I'm _____ about who wins this game since I'm not a fan of either team.
- When the law was passed, many who supported it didn't understand its negative _____.
- Olivia doesn't mean to be rude; she just has a habit of saying things very _____.
- Although his early writings were a bit awkward, his writing style has _____.

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.

Early adoption is a bad investment, to put it bluntly. [. . .] Prices of gadgets most often fall shortly after release, and they are likely to continue falling. For instance, many new TV models drop significantly in price as little as ten days after hitting the market. Furthermore, electronics rapidly depreciate because they become obsolete so quickly; the resale price of a used cell phone or laptop can drop by fifty percent within just a few months.

DETECTING ARGUMENTS

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

- a. The value of electronic devices depreciates when they're not popular.
- b. Early adopters are more likely to lose money by selling obsolete devices.
- c. It makes sense to wait before buying a "new" technological device.
- d. Shoppers refuse to buy new products because they'll soon be obsolete.

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 are early adopters viewed in your circle of friends?
2. Have you ever purchased a new product when it was first released? Describe the experience.
3. Describe an expensive and trendy product you want. Why do you want it so badly?

SHARING YOUR OPINION

Write a paragraph about whether you think being an early adopter is worth it or not. Give multiple reasons.





LESSON 2

— SKILLS

Reading Skill:
Making Predictions

Critical-Thinking Skill:
Detecting Arguments

THE FUN OF BEING AN EARLY ADOPTER

— WARM-UP

1. How important is it to you to be considered cool?
2. Have you ever taught someone how to use a certain technology? What was it?

BEFORE YOU READ

Rank the people you trust most when it comes to large purchasing decisions from 1 (most trustworthy) to 6 (least trustworthy). Discuss your rankings with a partner.

- _____ Friends
- _____ Bloggers
- _____ Family
- _____ Twitter
- _____ Social-media influencers
- _____ Product reviewers on purchasing sites (like Amazon)

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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

1. The **select** minority of people who try new technology first are called early adopters.
a. exclusive b. primary c. chosen
2. The **majority** of people usually wait until a technology has been proven.
a. assembly b. entirety c. bulk
3. Having the latest devices gives the impression of having technological **expertise**.
a. insight b. proficiency c. vision
4. Early adopters that try new technologies **relevant** to their jobs can find them useful for developing their careers.
a. permissible b. tolerable c. suitable
5. Being more knowledgeable about tech that's related to your **occupation** can be an advantage.
a. profession b. title c. education
6. Early adopters are often **consulted** by colleagues about technology.
a. referred to b. expected to c. pointed to
7. Companies allow early adopters to have a say in **forthcoming** products.
a. pending b. approaching c. available
8. Early adopters are participants in an experiment, but they are **voluntary** participants.
a. widespread b. independent c. willing