

BRIDGE TO POSTGRADUATE: ENGLISH & ACADEMIC SKILLS

SKILLS TODAY, SUCCESS TOMORROW

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STUDENT BOOK



**Bridge to Postgraduate:
English & Academic Skills**
Skills Today, Success Tomorrow

STUDENT BOOK

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Introduction

Welcome to Bridge to Postgraduate: English & Academic Skills (Skills Today, Success Tomorrow) student book.

Bridge to Postgraduate: English & Academic Skills is a six-week, full-time course designed to help you get ready for postgraduate study at university. It runs Monday to Friday, with two sessions each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Each week has a special theme to help you grow your academic skills, build confidence, and prepare for life at university.

You will work on:

- Academic reading and writing
- Speaking and listening for university settings
- Research and critical thinking skills
- Working well in teams and giving presentations
- Learning how to use technology and creativity in your studies

You'll also explore what it means to be a successful student, meet alumni speakers, and practice real academic tasks. There will be interactive group work, games, discussions, and reflection activities to keep things fun and engaging.

This book is your guide. It includes space to take notes, key vocabulary, and helpful resources. Keep it with you each day.

It's exciting to have you on this journey. Let's build your skills, confidence, and community, step by step.

Week 1: Building Bridges – Foundations for Success

Day 1: Welcome & Setting the Foundations

Morning Session (2.5 hours)

Theme: Establishing a Supportive Learning Environment

1. Icebreaker – Name & One Interesting Fact

Goal: Get to know your classmates and start feeling comfortable in class.

What to Do:

1. Your teacher will go first and share their name and a fun fact (like a favorite food or something interesting they've done).
2. When it's your turn, say:
 - Your name
 - One interesting fact about yourself
(For example: a hobby you enjoy, a place you've visited, or something unique about you!)
3. While everyone is speaking, try to listen carefully and remember what your classmates share.
4. After everyone has finished, your teacher will randomly ask some of you to say the name and fun fact of one of your classmates.

Tip: Keep it simple and have fun! This is a great way to start making new friends.

2. Course Overview & Professional Discussion

Goal: Understand the course and connect it to your academic or professional goals.

What to Do:

1. Your teacher will show you a short presentation about the course schedule and what you'll be learning.
2. Talk with a partner:
How does this course connect to your academic or career goals?
Share your ideas with each other.

3. Then, as a class, you'll discuss:
What skills are important for success in postgraduate study?
Your teacher will write your ideas on the board.
4. Finally, you'll hear a short talk about professional behaviour in academic settings, and how this connects to what you might already know from work or business environments.

3. Group Activity – Building a Paper Bridge

Goal: Work together in a team and kick off the "Building Bridges" theme.

What to Do:

1. You'll be divided into small groups (3-4 people in each group).
2. Your teacher will give you materials: paper, tape, and straws.
3. The challenge: Build the strongest bridge you can in 15 minutes.
4. Think about strategies: For example, folding the paper into columns or layers might help make your bridge stronger.
5. After building, each group will present their bridge and explain how they built it.
6. Your teacher will then connect this activity to your learning: *"Just like building this bridge, this course is about building both academic and personal skills."*

4. Reflection & Mini Writing Task

Goal: Practice reflection skills and basic academic writing.

What to Do:

1. Your teacher will introduce academic linking words (words that connect ideas) and write some examples on the board:
 - **Addition:** furthermore, moreover, in addition
 - **Contrast:** however, on the other hand, whereas
 - **Cause & Effect:** therefore, as a result, consequently
 - **Sequencing:** first, then, next, finally
2. Your teacher will show an example of a short reflection paragraph on the board, using linking words.

3. Now, it's your turn! Write 5-6 sentences about your experience in today's class. Try to use at least two linking words from the list.
4. Peer sharing: Exchange your writing with a partner and underline the linking words in their writing.
5. Your teacher will give feedback by pointing out common mistakes and showing how to use linking words correctly.

Week 1, Day 1 - Afternoon Session: Communication & Collaboration Skills (2.5 hours)

1. Interactive Lecture: The Importance of Communication

- **Objective:** Understand why communication is key in academic and professional settings.
- **Instructions:**
 1. Teacher presents key points (clarity, active listening, and tone).
 2. Take notes and discuss key takeaways in pairs.
 3. Teacher checks comprehension through questions.
 - **Discussion Question:** Share an experience where poor communication led to a misunderstanding. What could have been done better?

2. Activity: The Listening Challenge

- **Objective:** Improve listening and note-taking skills.
- **Instructions:**
 1. Teacher reads a short academic passage twice, and you take notes.
 2. Please compare notes and fill in missing details in pairs.
 3. Teacher asks students to summarize key points.
 - **Follow-up Questions:**
 1. What are three elements of effective teamwork?
 2. Why is collaboration important?
 3. What happens if teamwork fails?

3. Role-Playing Scenarios

- **Objective:** Practice communication and collaboration in real-life scenarios.
- **Instructions:**
 1. Teacher demonstrates a role-play (e.g., discussing a project deadline).
 2. In pairs, practice the scenarios with roles and prompts:

- **Scenario 1:** Discussing a project deadline (Academic Setting)
 - **Scenario 2:** Asking for clarification on lecture material (Academic Setting)
 - **Scenario 3:** Giving feedback on a peer's presentation (Professional Setting)
3. Focus on clear, respectful communication and using linking words.
- **Teacher Demo:** Show how to use polite language and linking words like “first,” “then,” and “as a result.”

4. Debrief and Discussion

- Reflect on communication strategies and what worked.
- Discuss any mistakes and reinforce the use of academic phrases.

5. Reflection & Writing Task

- **Objective:** Reinforce key takeaways through reflection and writing.
- **Instructions:**
 1. Teacher asks, "What did you learn today that will help in your academic life?"
 2. In small groups, share your thoughts.
 3. Write a structured paragraph reflecting on a communication experience, using academic linking words.
- **Example:**

"One important communication experience I had was during a group project in my undergrad. We struggled with coordination until I suggested using a shared document to track progress. This helped us meet our deadline and taught me that clear communication is vital for collaboration."

Week 1, Day 2 – Morning Session: Developing Key Academic Skills & Effective Communication (2.5 hours)

Focus: Understand and practice academic writing structure. Improve clarity and organization in written communication.

1. Introduction to Academic Writing Structure

Objective: Learn about the basic structure of an academic essay (Introduction, Body, Conclusion).

- Take notes as your teacher explains what each part of an essay does.
- Listen to an example essay read aloud. Take notes about:
 - What the introduction includes
 - What kind of information is in each body paragraph
 - How the conclusion is written

Example Essay: The Impact of Social Media on Language Learning

Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate, and it has also had a significant impact on language learning. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube expose learners to authentic language use, provide opportunities for real-time communication, and make language learning engaging and accessible. This essay explores how social media enhances language learning by offering learners access to real-world language contexts and by improving their writing and speaking skills.

Body Paragraph 1:

One of the main advantages of social media is that it provides learners with exposure to authentic language. Unlike traditional classroom settings, where students might learn formal language, social media allows learners to encounter everyday language in context. For example, learners can read posts, watch videos, and interact with native speakers, thereby improving their vocabulary, slang, and colloquial expressions. Platforms like YouTube also offer language learners the chance to listen to podcasts, watch tutorials, and follow channels dedicated to language learning, making it easier to understand natural speech patterns.

Body Paragraph 2:

In addition to exposing learners to authentic language, social media platforms provide opportunities for practicing writing and speaking skills. On platforms like Twitter, learners are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas concisely in 140 characters. This encourages clarity in writing. Social media also facilitates real-time communication through comments, chat messages, and voice notes, which can improve speaking fluency. For instance, learners can interact with others in English or another language, practice writing formal or informal messages, and engage in live conversations that reinforce their language skills.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, social media offers language learners invaluable resources for improving their language skills. By providing access to authentic language, expanding vocabulary, and creating opportunities for writing and speaking practice, social media has become an essential tool for language learning. Therefore, learners should use social media not just as a source of entertainment but as a tool for educational growth and language development.

2. Group Writing Activity: Essay Structure Analysis

Objective: Work in a small group to analyze how an academic essay is structured.

In your group:

- Fill in this outline by discussing the model essay you just heard:
 - **Introduction:**
 - **Body Paragraph 1 (Main Point + Evidence):**
 - **Body Paragraph 2 (Main Point + Evidence):**
 - **Conclusion:**

Be ready to share your answers with the class.

3. Writing Practice: Drafting Your Own Essay

Objective: Practice writing a short academic essay using a clear structure.

Topic: *The Impact of Online Learning on Education*

Instructions:

- Write a short academic essay:
 - Introduction
 - Two Body Paragraphs
 - Conclusion
- Use the structure you learned.
- Focus on organizing your ideas clearly and supporting them with examples.

Week 1, Day 2 - Afternoon Session: Effective Communication in Presentations & Active Listening (2.5 hours)

1. Interactive Lecture: Key Skills for Effective Presentations

Focus: Learn essential skills for delivering clear and engaging presentations.

Key Skills for Effective Presentations:

- **Structure:** Your presentation should have a clear **Introduction, Main Points**, and a **Conclusion** (Think of it as a mini essay).
- **Clarity:** Ensure your message is clear. Avoid jargon and keep slides simple and easy to understand.
- **Engagement:** Engage your audience through asking questions, making eye contact, and using visuals.

Watch the following TED Talks for examples:

- **TED Talk 1:** "How to Speak so that People Want to Listen" – Julian Treasure

Link: [Watch Here](#)

After watching, consider:

- What key strategies did the speaker use to engage the audience?
- How did the speaker structure their presentation?

- **TED Talk 2:** "How to Present Your Ideas Effectively" – Chris Anderson

Link: [Watch Here](#)

Reflect on:

- What are the main tips for engaging the audience?
- What role do visuals play in the presentation?

2. Listening and Note-Taking Challenge

Focus: Practice active listening and note-taking skills, then summarize notes into a mini-presentation.

Pre-Listening Instructions:

We will watch a short TED Talk on improving communication skills. Your task is to listen carefully, take structured notes, and later use those notes to create a short summary.

Use this note-taking structure:

- **Main Idea:** What is the speaker's key message?

- **Supporting Points:** What evidence or examples does the speaker give?
- **Conclusion:** What is the speaker's final message?

TED Talk:

- **Title:** "How to Speak So That People Want to Listen" – Julian Treasure
Duration: 2:48 minutes
Link: [Watch Here](#)
Topic: This talk focuses on how to improve communication and make people want to listen.

Listening & Note-Taking:

1. **First Listening & Note-Taking:**
Listen to the TED Talk once without pausing. Focus on the main ideas, not writing every word.
2. **Second Listening & Refining Notes:**
Listen again and fill in any missing details in your notes.
Pair-Share: Compare notes with a partner and add any important details you missed.

3. Note Structuring & Mini-Presentation

Focus: Organize your notes and present a short summary.

1. **Organizing Notes into a Summary:**
Based on your notes, write a 4-5 sentence summary of the TED Talk.
2. **Pair and Group Sharing:**
Share your summary with a partner. Then, form groups of four and choose one person's summary to present to the class.
3. **Class Presentations:**
Each group selects one person to deliver a short spoken summary of the TED Talk to the class.

4. Presentation Practice in Pairs

Focus: Practice delivering a short presentation and give constructive feedback to peers.

1. **Activity Setup:**
Pair up with a classmate. Each of you will deliver a 2-minute presentation based on the earlier activity.

2. **Presentation and Feedback:**

After each presentation, the partner provides feedback on:

- **Clarity:** How clear was the message?
- **Structure:** Was the presentation easy to follow?
- **Engagement:** Did the presenter keep the audience interested?

5. **Reflection & Group Discussion**

Focus: Reflect on the day's learning and discuss areas for improvement.

1. **Reflection:**

Write down three things you learned about giving presentations today. Focus on skills or techniques you plan to use in your future presentations.

2. **Group Discussion:**

Share your reflections with the group. Discuss what worked well and areas for improvement in delivering presentations.

Week 1, Day 3: Morning Session – Understanding and Using Critical Thinking in Academic Communication (2.5 hours)

Theme: Developing critical thinking skills and applying them to academic discussions, presentations, and writing.

1. Introduction to Critical Thinking

Objective: To define critical thinking and its importance in postgraduate studies.

Teacher's Instructions for You:

1. Begin with a Question:

Ask yourself: “What is critical thinking?”

- Discuss this question with a partner first, and then share your thoughts with the whole class.
- Write down your ideas to visualize different perspectives.

2. Definition & Explanation:

- **Critical thinking** means carefully analyzing information, questioning ideas, and making logical, well-supported conclusions.
- Here’s a summary of what critical thinking involves:
 - Asking why and how, not just what.
 - Identifying bias in arguments.
 - Evaluating evidence before accepting an idea.
 - Forming logical arguments with clear reasoning.

3. Real-Life Example:

Poor vs. Strong Critical Thinking:

-  **Weak Critical Thinking:** “This article says social media is bad for students, so it must be true.”
-  **Strong Critical Thinking:** “Who wrote this article? What evidence do they provide? Are they biased? Are there other perspectives?”

- **Activity:** Come up with one critical thinking question about the example above. For instance: "What evidence does the article use to support its claim?"

2. Identifying Bias and Evaluating Sources

Objective: Learn to identify bias and evaluate the reliability of sources in academic research.

Teacher's Instructions for You:

1. Read Two Short News Articles:

Article 1: Reliable Source

Title: "Internet Has Encouraged Our Writing, Linguist Says"

Source: The Times

Summary: Canadian linguist Gretchen McCulloch argues that the internet has expanded our writing practices rather than diminishing them. Before the advent of social media, texting, and emails, many people ceased writing after formal education. Today, it's rare to go a day without writing, whether through texts or social media posts. McCulloch suggests that the internet fosters informal written communication, blurring the lines between spoken and written language, and encourages creativity through new forms like emojis. She refutes the notion that technology degrades language, highlighting instead its role in enriching writing practices.

Article 2: Less Reliable Source

Title: "Why Social Media is Ruining English"

Source: Random Blog

Summary: The author of this blog post expresses concern that social media platforms are negatively impacting the English language. They argue that the use of abbreviations, slang, and emojis on platforms like Twitter and Facebook is leading to a decline in proper grammar and vocabulary. The post suggests that this trend is especially problematic among younger users, who may be developing poor writing habits. However, it's important to note that this perspective comes from an individual blog and may not be supported by extensive research.

2. Group Activity:

- You will work in small groups. Each group will read both articles.

- Discuss the following to evaluate the reliability of each article:
 - a) Who wrote it? (An expert, a journalist, or an unknown person?)
 - b) Is there evidence? (Are facts supported by research or just opinions?)
 - c) Is there bias? (Does the writer have a reason to convince you of something?)

3. Class Discussion:

- Each group will share their findings with the class. Explain which article you think is more reliable and why. Focus on evaluating the source's credibility, potential bias, and the quality of evidence provided.

3. Asking the Right Questions: Socratic Questioning

Objective: Learn to form deeper, analytical questions to improve discussions.

Teacher's Instructions for You:

1. Socratic Questioning Explained:

Here are six types of questions to explore ideas more deeply:

1. **Clarification:** "What do you mean by that?"
2. **Assumption Testing:** "What are you assuming here?"
3. **Evidence-Based:** "What is the evidence for this?"
4. **Alternative Viewpoints:** "Are there other perspectives?"
5. **Implications:** "What are the consequences?"
6. **Summary Questions:** "How can we summarize this?"

2. Pair Work:

- You will be given a controversial statement. Discuss it with a partner and ask each other three Socratic questions about it.
- **Class Reflection:**
- Share your favorite Socratic questions with the class. Discuss how these types of questions can help deepen your understanding and analysis of topics.

Week 1, Day 3: Afternoon Session – Using Critical Thinking in Argumentation and Debate (2.5 hours)

Theme: Building and applying critical thinking through argument structure and debates.

1. Interactive Lecture: How to Structure a Strong Argument

Objective: Learn how to build clear, well-reasoned arguments in speaking and writing.

What You'll Do:

1. Learn the Structure of an Argument

Your teacher will explain how to structure an argument clearly. Here's the structure you'll learn:

- **Claim:** Your main point or opinion
 - Example: *"Social media improves language learning."*
- **Evidence:** A fact, example, statistic, or expert opinion
 - Example: *"Studies show students who use English on social media improve vocabulary faster."*
- **Counter-argument:** A possible opposing view
 - Example: *"However, some people argue social media is full of incorrect language use."*

2. See a Complete Example

Your teacher will show you another example and explain it:

- **Claim:** *"University students should be required to study a second language."*
- **Evidence:** *"Research shows bilingualism improves cognitive abilities and job opportunities."*
- **Counter-argument:** *"However, learning languages is time-consuming, and not all students are interested."*

3. Group Brainstorming Activity

- Get into small groups. Your group will receive this statement:
"AI will replace human teachers in the future."
- Your task: Build a full argument by writing:

- A clear **claim**
- **Two pieces of evidence**
- One **counter-argument**
- After preparing, each group will present their argument to the class.

2. Watching a Fun Debate Example & Discussion

Objective: See how debates work in a fun and engaging way.

What You'll Do:

1. Watch a Short Video

- You'll watch a fun mini-debate:
"Should Pineapple Be on Pizza?"
 - [Watch here](#)

2. Class Discussion

After watching, your teacher will guide a discussion. Be ready to answer:

- What arguments did each side make?
- How did they support their points?
- Were there any strong counter-arguments?
- Did the humor help make the debate more interesting?

3. Critical Thinking Debate – Can You Argue Effectively?

Objective: Practice using critical thinking in a real academic-style debate.

What You'll Do:

1. Topic Announcement

- Your teacher will introduce today's debate topic:
"Should students be allowed to use ChatGPT for academic writing?"
- First, you'll share quick opinions to see what everyone thinks.

2. Join a Team and Prepare Your Role (10 minutes)

- You'll be divided into two teams:
 - **Team YES:** Students *should* be allowed to use ChatGPT
 - **Team NO:** Students *should not* be allowed to use ChatGPT
- Within each team, take on a role:
 - **Lead speakers** – introduce your team's main points
 - **Supporters** – give extra evidence and examples
 - **Rebuttal speakers** – challenge the other team's points

3. Prepare Your Arguments

In your teams, prepare your side by writing:

- Three strong points to support your position
- One counter-argument to challenge the other team
- Evidence or examples for your points

4. Debate Time!

- Each team presents their arguments:
 - **Opening statements** – main arguments from both sides
 - **Rebuttals** – each team challenges the other's ideas
 - **Final summary** – one minute per team to summarize your position

5. Wrap-Up Reflection

- Class discussion:
 - What was the most persuasive argument?
 - Did anyone change their opinion? Why or why not?
- Writing task:
 - Write a short reflection:
 - Which side do you personally agree with?
 - Why? Give at least one reason and one example.

Week 1, Day 4 Morning Session: Networking Skills for Postgraduate Success (2.5 hours)

Theme: Communication in Action – Effective Collaboration and Networking

Objective:

Develop key networking skills to help you build professional relationships in academic and corporate settings. You will focus on making strong introductions, small talk, and effective follow-up strategies.

1. Warm-Up: Networking Bingo

Get ready to move around and talk to your classmates! Your goal is to fill in a row on your Bingo card by finding people who match the descriptions in the squares.

- Ask your classmates questions to discover who fits which category.
- Example: “Do you speak more than one language?” or “Have you ever worked in marketing?”
- When you find a match, write their name in that square.
- Try to complete a full row—horizontally, vertically, or diagonally!

The first person to get Bingo wins a small prize (or big applause)!

2. Introduction to Networking Skills

You’ll learn the three basic skills of networking:

Introductions

Start a conversation with a friendly and confident introduction.

Example:

"Hi, my name is Maria. I'm a postgraduate student in environmental studies. How about you?"

Small Talk

Ask open-ended questions to keep the conversation going.

Example:

"What inspired you to study this field?"

"What’s the most interesting thing you’ve learned recently?"

Follow-Up

Stay connected after the conversation.

Example:

"It was great chatting! Let's connect on LinkedIn so we can keep in touch."

3. Pair Practice: Networking Basics

Practice makes progress! In pairs:

1. **Introduce yourselves.**
Take turns using the introduction style from earlier.
2. **Start a short conversation.**
Ask at least 2 open-ended questions.
3. **Give each other feedback.**
Was it easy to introduce yourself? Was the conversation interesting?

4. Role-Playing: Real-World Networking

In pairs, choose a realistic scenario and practice your networking skills.

Example Scenarios:

- You meet someone at a research conference who works in your field of interest.
- You meet a professor from another department at a university event.
- You meet someone at a company mixer who could help you with your future goals.

Use your skills to:

- Make a good introduction
- Keep the conversation going with small talk
- Ask follow-up questions
- End the conversation professionally

After 10 minutes, switch roles and try another scenario!

5. Mini Debate Prep: Should Students Be Required to Network?

Time for a friendly debate!

Topic:

"Should students be required to network at academic conferences?"

1. Split into two teams:
 - Team 1: **Yes, students should be required to network.**
 - Team 2: **No, students should not be required to network.**
2. Prepare your arguments:
 - Come up with **3 key points** to support your side.
 - Think of **1 counter-argument** to what the other side might say.
3. Example ideas:
 - **Yes:** “Networking builds connections that lead to research and job opportunities.”
 - **No:** “Not everyone feels comfortable networking—it can feel forced and fake.”
4. Debate Time!
 - Each group presents their points clearly and listens respectfully.

6. Group Reflection & Follow-Up

Let’s think about what we learned today.

Reflect:

What is one thing you’ll take away from today’s session?

Example: “I learned how to keep a conversation going by asking open questions.”

Discuss:

How can you practice networking in your everyday academic life?

Ideas: Join a student group, message a guest speaker on LinkedIn, talk to classmates during breaks.

7. Wrap-Up & Final Networking Chat

Let’s end with one more networking experience.

- Pair up with someone new.
- Share your favorite academic experience or a project you’re proud of.
- Try to include an introduction, a small talk question, and a friendly closing.