

UNIT 1



21st Century Skills



In this unit, you will:

- watch a video and read a text about 21st Century Skills
- learn vocabulary related to the topic
- do some vocabulary practice on synonyms
- do some practice on stating your opinion or agreeing/disagreeing with a person/opinion

Warm-up

4Cs?

1. What does “21st century skills” mean to you? Can you name some of them?
2. Do you think that the acquisition of these skills is important for young people?
3. In what ways can students make use of these skills in their future lives?



Screening

a. You are going to watch a video about 21st century skills and learn what they are. Before watching the video, have a look at the outline in Part 1 and think about the missing information and then fill in the blanks while watching it.



21st Century Skills

Definition: 21st century skills are twelve abilities that students need to succeed in the age of the internet

1st category: Learning Skills (aka the 4 C's)

- creativity
- critical thinking
- collaboration
- communication

2nd category: Literacy Skills (aka the IMT Skills)

- information literacy
- media literacy
- technology literacy

3rd category: Life Skills (aka the FLIPS)

- flexibility
- leadership
- initiative
- productivity
- social skills

b. Make a critique of the skills outlined above and discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. Which of these categories outweigh the others in importance for future use?
 2. Which of these skills are you good at? Which ones do you think need further development to succeed in your academic, professional and personal life?
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Reading

Before You Read

Before reading the text, have a look at the questions below and discuss your answer with your friends.

1. Do you think that the needs of today's graduates differ from that of the past?
2. What is expected from today's workforce?
3. What do institutions in higher education do to meet the immediate demands of the current workforce?

Vocabulary Study 1: Matching Synonyms

The following sentences are chosen from the text. First check the bold words in the context and guess their meaning without using a dictionary. Then, match the words with the given synonyms.

1. This **framework** outlined different skills deemed especially valuable and necessary to prepare today's students for tomorrow's workforce.
 2. Numerous states have since joined P21 through the years and have built these 21st century skills into their school districts' **curriculums**.
 3. 21st century skills were specifically selected and **deemed** critical to modern workplaces.
 4. **Competencies** like communication and collaboration have long been characterized as soft skills and remain important through the evolution into 21st century skills.
 5. These are **attributes** that employers are seeking in job candidates.
 6. ..., so how can schools **equip** students with these types of 21st century skills without **overhauling** their entire curriculum?
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7. Several higher education institutions have **acknowledged** the need to better prepare students for the modern workforce using a more innovative approach.
8. From there, they can add it to their LinkedIn account, website, portfolio, or **resume**.
9. Fortunately, most of the **prominent** institutions are aware of these needs and they are constantly in an up-date in their curriculum to prepare their graduates for the professional world.

Target Words	Synonyms
1. framework	a. prepare; qualify 6
2. curriculums	b. admitted; accepted 8
3. deemed	c. structure; scheme 1
4. competencies	d. re-examining; revising 7
5. attributes	e. regarded as; considered 3
6. equip	f. biography; CV 9
7. overhauling	g. important; outstanding 10
8. acknowledged	h. skills; abilities 4
9. resume	i. features; characteristics 5
10.prominent	j. syllabuses; course contents. 2

Read the text below and answer the questions.



THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS TODAY'S GRADUATES NEED TO SUCCEED

by Kristina Ericksen, 2020

A We're in the information age, in which the economy is shaped by technology — a significant departure from manufacturing-focused industrialism. With new innovation comes exciting promise, but also a unique set of challenges for today's graduates. Today, young people need a set of new skills, which has been dubbed “21st century skills”, in order to succeed. Thus, it is so important to learn more about 21st century skills and what it means for higher education and work life.

B The 21st century skills movement caught on around the beginning of the millennium, when the National Education Association established the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) and developed a “Framework for 21st Century Learning.” This framework outlined different skills deemed especially valuable and necessary to prepare today's students for tomorrow's workforce. Numerous states have since joined P21 through the years and have built these 21st century skills into their school districts' curriculums.

C 21st century skills were specifically selected and deemed critical to modern workplaces. *Advancements in technology have changed not only the type of work that's done, but how it's done.*

Because of this, the human element is growing more important than ever before. This is especially true with emerging technologies, such as machine learning and artificial intelligence. With technology taking on more and more of the repetitive, task-based work, it means that humans are left to tackle more dynamic issues that require creativity, critical thinking and collaboration.

What do employers think of 21st century skills?

D The term “soft skills” is slowly being replaced by “21st century skills.” Competencies like communication and collaboration have long been characterized as soft skills and remain important through the evolution into 21st century skills.



E These are attributes that employers are seeking in job candidates. In fact, a majority of employers find these skills to be just as important as technical skills. In LinkedIn’s 2019 Global Talent Trends Report, over 90 percent of surveyed employers reported that soft skills are just as or even more important to hire for than hard skills and in a recent survey of 400 employers, 85 percent reported that they want to hire individuals with a broad range of knowledge and skills, as compared to field-specific skills.

F Unfortunately, only 11 percent of business leaders agree that today’s college graduates have the skills needed for today’s dynamic workforce. On the other hand, 96 percent of college academic officers believe in their school’s ability to prepare students for the workforce. As you can see, there’s a disconnection between academia and business world. So, what can be done to connect the needs of employers with the qualifications of college graduates?

What role does higher education play in developing 21st century skills?

G Some universities or particular programs naturally incorporate these kinds of transferable skills into their curriculum. Liberal arts programs, for example, are known for their emphasis on soft skills like leadership, communication, and teamwork. But 21st century skills aren't only valuable for communications or philosophy majors. Even the most technical fields – like computer science or accounting – are in need of professionals who can collaborate, adapt, think critically and take initiative, so how can schools equip students with these types of 21st century skills without overhauling their entire curriculum?



H Several higher education institutions have acknowledged the need to better prepare students for the modern workforce using a more innovative approach. *This* includes new offerings, such as digital badges and micro-credentials, which help arm their graduates with the 21st century skills employers are seeking. Digital badges can cover anything from blogging to time management or even initiative – competencies that until now have not been formally recognized on resumes or LinkedIn profiles. Students earn digital badges in a similar manner to competency-based courses. A digital badge typically contains sub-competencies that are outlined within a rubric, and students must prove their proficiency in the specified skill in order to earn the badge. From there, they can add it to their LinkedIn account, website, portfolio or resume.

I The workforce has evolved, and higher education must follow it. Today's graduates are entering a different type of workforce, so make sure you're setting yours up for success. Fortunately, most of the prominent institutions are aware of these needs and they are constantly in an up-date in their curriculum to prepare their graduates for the professional world.

Comprehension Check

1 According to Par. A, the main difference between the economy of today and the past derives from the fact that today's economy is driven by technology which is in contrast with that of the past when everything was determined by industrial activities.

2 According to Par. B, what is the reason for the curriculum renewal projects in many states?

Schools in many states have changed their curriculums to prepare their students well for the demands of their future professional lives.

3 In Par. C, what does the writer mean by saying "Advancements in technology have changed not only the type of work that's done, but how it's done"?

Technological developments have not only paved the way for new jobs but also changed the way how work is conducted.

4 The reason why the writer has included some research findings in Par. E is to highlight that the number of employers who value 21st Century skills in their prospective staff are considerably high.

5 What is the conflict between the workforce and academia in Par. F?

While most of the current employers believe that tertiary institutions do not provide ground for the development of 21st century skills, most of the academicians think just the opposite and believe that they equip their students well for their future.

6 According to Par. G, we can understand that _____.

- a. some soft skills are only required for students majoring in art programs
 - b. education in liberal art programs is rather demanding as it requires mastery in both technical and soft skills
 - c. soft skills are not that much important for students in technical fields
 - d. the acquisition of soft skills has utmost importance for students regardless of their disciplines
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7 What does “this” refer to in Par. H?

The need to better prepare students for the future with innovative approaches

8 According to Par. H, what do students need to do in order to earn a digital badge?

They need to acquire some sub-competencies which have been specified in a rubric and prove their proficiency in them.

9 According to paragraphs G and H, which of the following cannot be added as a digital badge on one’s resume or LinkedIn account?

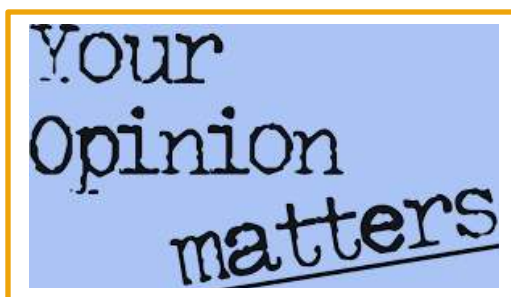
- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. Management skills | b. Collaboration skills |
| c. Organizational skills | <u>d. Technical skills</u> |

Speaking Practice 1: Stating your Opinion – Agreeing/Disagreeing

At home, at school and in our social network, we frequently express our opinion about a general topic, an issue, a topic of discussion, etc. Giving opinions as well as agreeing and disagreeing with an idea/person is one of the most common kinds of functional language that we have to produce. In fact, we state opinions whenever we express something “personal”, be it a paired-choice, a group discussion or a debate. It is thus important to know how to put our ideas or opinions into words and sound “natural” while speaking.

The three-prong approach to stating your opinion:

- Give your opinion and/or agree or disagree with the prompt
- Explain your opinion by putting forward (at least) two arguments
- Expand your arguments with some support, usually in the form of details, examples or etc.



Example: Studying online is a better way to learn English.

(give your opinion) *To be honest, before studying online, I'd have said no to that. But now that I have done it, in my limited experience I would absolutely agree with the statement.* **(explain your opinion – argument one)** *Above all, technology used in the lessons is an incredible tool to improve your learning and your level.* **(expand your argument one)** *For instance, my teacher records all of our classes which means I can go back and rewatch them if I cannot remember something, if I need some clarification or if I want to listen to my own speaking.* **(explain your opinion – argument two)** *Studying online also made it possible for me to take up some hobbies as I didn't have to leave home for school.* **(expand your argument two)** *For instance, I am doing punch needle embroidery and enjoying it a lot!*

Here are some **structures/useful language** you can make use of while stating your opinion/agreeing/disagreeing. Note that there are a lot more to add to the list; however, what matters is how *clearly* and *naturally* you convey the message rather than how fancy the formulaic language is.

Stating opinion	Agreeing/Partly agreeing	Disagreeing
As far as I am concerned, ... In my (honest/humble) opinion, ... I'd probably/definitely say that ... To be honest, ... Well, actually, ... Personally, ... In my limited/extensive experience, ... It seems to me that ... My impression (on ...) is that ... I have the feeling that ...	I couldn't agree with that more! You're right. / You're absolutely right about that. I feel the same way. That's a good point. I share your view that ... That's just what I was thinking. I feel more or less the same way. I agree with (you) up to a point.	I really don't agree. I don't really agree. (note the difference!) I can see what you/they are trying to say, but ... I understand your/their point of view, but ... I am sorry, but I have to disagree. I am not so sure about that. I take a different view. Yes, but don't you think that ...

Speaking Task 1: Stating your Opinion – Agreeing/Disagreeing

Now, think about the question below and state your opinion using the *three-prong approach*.

Do you think that schools/universities can provide a good ground to develop 21st century skills? Why? Why not?

Do not forget to make use of the useful structures and upgrade your speech with new vocabulary you learned in this unit. Below you can find the list of vocabulary items introduced in this unit and an additional list of more words and phrases that you may wish to use in your speech.

Vocabulary items in the exercises	More vocabulary items/phrases
framework	changing workforce
curriculum	transformation/evolution of workforce
deem	new job descriptions/demands/ requirements
competencies	graduates
attributes	prospective/future employees
equip	skills/attributes/ qualifications
overhaul	qualified/proficient/capable employees
acknowledge	acquisition of a skill
resume	(to) acquire/develop/improve a skill
prominent	(to) be well-equipped for (something)
	(to) equip sb well for (something)
	(to) be highly qualified for (something)

Recycling Vocabulary 1

Part 1: Fill in the blanks by using one of the words given in the table.

framework	resume	deemed
competencies	curriculum	prominent
attributes	equip	overhauled

1. Curriculum renewal projects aim at revising school programs on a regular basis to make them serve better for the changing needs of students.
 2. With the changing demands in workplaces, educators need to update their education schemes in order to equip students well for their prospective jobs.
 3. Today, academic success is not the mere qualification for a good recruitment after graduation. Graduates need to have some other attributes such as communication, problem solving and high order thinking skills.
 4. Within the rising demand in health services in the pandemic, most countries have overhauled their health care systems or made some significant changes in order to provide a better service for their citizens.
 5. A behavioral interview is a job interview during which a job applicant is asked to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skills, and abilities, also known as competencies.
 6. There is a vacant post for a senior finance director in our company. If you know someone who might be interested in the post, you can forward his/her resume by next Monday.
 7. Because the prior studies employed similar methods of data collection, it was deemed reasonable to compile the data together for the present study.
 8. I think this report provides a good framework for further research. We need to conduct all our future work according to the guidelines set in this report.
 9. There was a lot of interest for the conference. I think the attendance of some government officials and the most prominent academicians made the event remarkable among the others.
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References:

<https://collegiseducation.com/news/higher-ed-trends/21st-century-skills/>

<https://youtu.be/QYfCEnTmr5o>

