



IELTS Reading Introduction

This comprehensive guide will help you understand the structure, question types, and strategies for success in the IELTS Reading test. Whether you're taking the Academic or General Training module, these insights will prepare you to approach the reading paper with confidence and maximize your score.

Academic vs. General Training Reading

Two Distinct Tests

There are two separate reading tests, one for Academic candidates and one for General Training candidates. Before enrolling for the test, you need to decide which test is best for you. Visit www.ielts.org for guidance on which version suits your needs.

The key difference lies in the content and complexity of the reading passages, with each test designed to assess reading skills relevant to different contexts.

Academic Module

Contains three long texts of an academic nature, suitable for university entrance or professional registration.

General Training Module

Features a mixture of long and short texts of a more general nature, as well as texts related to work situations, suitable for migration purposes.

Reading Test Structure and Timing

1

Test Duration

The test lasts 60 minutes. Within that time, you must complete three separate sections with a total of 40 questions.

2

Answer Transfer

You must transfer your answers onto a separate answer sheet. No extra time is given for this task, so manage your time accordingly.

3

Progressive Difficulty

Each section is a little more difficult than the one before and features authentic reading passages that assess different reading skills.

Effective time management is crucial for success. Try to finish each section in less than 20 minutes to ensure you have time to complete all questions and transfer your answers to the answer sheet.



Reading Skills Assessment

The IELTS Reading test evaluates your comprehension through 40 questions that typically paraphrase the text, requiring you to understand the meaning rather than simply locate identical words.



Identifying Purpose

Recognize the writer's overall purpose and main arguments in a text.



Recognizing Attitudes

Identify opinions and attitudes expressed by the writer.



Finding Information

Locate specific information and distinguish main ideas from supporting details.



Information Transfer

Extract information from a text to complete a diagram, summary, table or set of notes.

These skills reflect real-world reading abilities that are essential for academic study or workplace communication, making the test a valid assessment of your functional English reading proficiency.

Question Types: Text Completion Tasks

Several question types require you to write words or numbers directly from the reading passage. For these tasks, you must follow specific rules:

- Use only words from the passage
- Copy spelling exactly as it appears
- Do not change words from the passage
- Do not join words together unless they appear that way in the text
- Adhere to the word limit specified in the instructions

If you write too many words or make a spelling mistake, your answer will be marked wrong, so precision is essential.

Sentence Completion

Fill in gaps in sentences with words from the text.

Summary/Note Completion

Complete a summary or notes with key information from the passage.

Table/Flow-Chart Completion

Fill in missing information in a table or flow-chart that represents the text content.

Short-Answer Questions

Write brief answers using information from the text.

Diagram Label Completion

Label parts of a diagram based on information in the passage.

Question Types: Selection Tasks

Some question types require you to select from given options rather than writing words from the text. These include:

Multiple Choice

Select the correct answer from several options. These may test your understanding of main ideas, details, opinions, or implications.

Matching Information

Match statements or pieces of information to the correct paragraph or section of the text.

Matching Headings

Select appropriate headings for paragraphs or sections from a list of options.

Matching Features

Match specific features, characteristics, or claims to the correct person, theory, or other element in the text.

Matching Sentence Endings

Complete sentences by selecting the correct ending from a list of options.

True/False/Not Given or Yes/No/Not Given

Decide if statements align with information in the text, contradict it, or if the information is not provided.

For these questions, you need to write a letter (A, B, C, etc.) or words (True, False, Not Given) on your answer sheet according to the instructions.

IELTS Reading Skills 1

Reading Strategies: Using Text Features

Understanding the features of a reading passage can help you navigate the text more efficiently and locate information faster. Key features include:

- Headings - Main titles that indicate the topic
- Subheadings - Secondary titles that provide context
- Paragraphs - Units of text focusing on specific aspects
- Figures/Illustrations - Visual representations of information
- Captions - Text explaining figures or illustrations
- Footnotes - Additional information at the bottom of the page
- Columns - Vertical divisions of text on the page

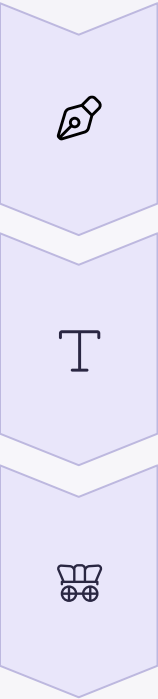
Recognizing these features allows you to predict the type of information contained in different parts of the passage and helps you locate specific details more quickly.



Identifying text features helps you understand how information is organized and where to look for specific details. This is particularly useful when you need to quickly locate information to answer questions.

Understanding Explanations and Definitions

IELTS Reading passages often contain technical terms that may be unfamiliar. These terms are typically explained in one of three ways:



Footnotes

Additional information provided at the bottom of the page that explains technical terms or provides context.

Direct Explanations

Definitions provided directly in the text, often following the term and indicated by phrases like "which are," "known as," or "refers to."

Contextual Clues

The meaning of terms can sometimes be inferred from the surrounding context without explicit definition.



Being able to identify and understand these explanations is crucial for comprehending the passage and answering questions accurately. Pay special attention to terms that are italicized, in bold, or followed by explanatory phrases.

Skimming and Speed Reading Techniques

Skimming for Main Ideas

Skimming means reading quickly to find the main points without focusing on details. It helps you understand the general organization of information and locate specific sections more easily later.

When skimming, focus on:

- First and last sentences of paragraphs
- Headings and subheadings
- Content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives)
- Visual elements (charts, diagrams)

In your native language, you can probably skim read 100 words in 20 seconds. For the IELTS exam, aim to skim read 100 words in 30 seconds.

Speed Reading Practice

To improve your speed reading:

1. Set a timer for 30 seconds per 100 words
2. Focus on understanding the main idea of each paragraph
3. Don't get caught up in unfamiliar vocabulary
4. Move to the next paragraph when the time is up
5. Practice summarizing what you've read in one sentence

Regular practice will gradually increase your reading speed while maintaining comprehension, which is essential for completing all sections of the test within the time limit.

Global Understanding of Passages

Some IELTS Reading questions focus on the entire passage rather than specific details. These questions assess your ability to understand the overall meaning, purpose, or tone of the text.

Identifying Suitable Titles

You may be asked to choose the most appropriate title for the passage from several options. This tests your understanding of the main theme or purpose of the entire text.

Recognizing Writer's Attitude

Questions may ask about the writer's tone or attitude toward the subject (e.g., neutral, enthusiastic, critical, doubtful). This requires understanding the overall perspective presented in the passage.

Identifying Text Type

You might need to identify whether the passage is descriptive, argumentative, narrative, or explanatory based on its structure and content.

Understanding Purpose

Questions may ask about the writer's main purpose (e.g., to inform, persuade, criticize, entertain). This requires evaluating the overall function of the text.

To answer these questions effectively, skim the entire passage first to get a general sense of its content and structure before focusing on specific details.

IELTS Reading Skill 2: Descriptive Passages

Scanning for Specific Details

Scanning is a reading technique where you search quickly for specific information without reading every word. This skill is essential for locating details needed to answer questions efficiently.

How to Scan Effectively:

1. Identify exactly what information you're looking for (names, dates, numbers, specific terms)
2. Move your eyes quickly over the text, looking only for those specific details
3. Use headings, subheadings, and paragraph beginnings as guides
4. When you find relevant information, slow down to read that section carefully
5. Resume scanning until you've found all the information you need

Practice Exercise:

Try scanning a passage for specific information such as:

- Dates (e.g., 75,000 years, 100,000 years)
- Names of people or places (e.g., Blombos Cave, Christopher S. Henshilwood)
- Technical terms (e.g., ochre, artefacts)
- Numbers and statistics

Time yourself and practice increasing your speed while maintaining accuracy. This skill will help you quickly locate the information needed to answer specific questions in the test.

Recognizing Paraphrase

Paraphrasing—using different words with the same meaning—is a key feature of IELTS Reading questions. The questions rarely use the exact words from the passage, testing your understanding of meaning rather than just word recognition.

Identify Synonyms

Questions often use synonyms of key words from the passage.
For example, "keep in" might be paraphrased as "stored" or "contained."

Understand Generalizations

Questions might generalize specific examples from the text or vice versa. For instance, "modern indigenous communities" might be paraphrased as "who makes use of ochre nowadays."

1

2

3

4

Recognize Restructured Sentences

The sentence structure in questions may differ from the passage while conveying the same meaning. Active voice might become passive, or complex sentences might be simplified.

Identify Cause and Effect Relationships

Questions might rephrase cause-effect relationships while maintaining the same logical connection. "Used for" might be paraphrased as "functioned as" or "purpose was."

Developing your ability to recognize paraphrases is essential for success in the IELTS Reading test. Practice identifying different ways information can be restated while preserving the original meaning.

Completing Notes and Flow-Charts

Note Completion Tasks

These tasks require you to fill in missing information in a set of notes based on the reading passage. Key strategies include:

- Use the headings in the notes to locate relevant sections in the passage
- Pay attention to the word limit specified in the instructions
- Look for paraphrases of the information surrounding the gaps
- The information may not appear in the same order as in the notes
- Check that your answers fit grammatically into the sentence structure

Note completion tasks often cover larger portions of the reading passage and test your ability to identify key information across different sections.

Flow-Chart Completion Tasks

Flow-charts represent sequences of events or processes. When completing flow-charts:

- Understand the overall process being described before filling in gaps
- Look for sequential language (first, then, next, finally) in the passage
- Pay attention to the logical progression of steps
- The information in the passage may not follow the same order as the flow-chart
- Ensure your answers maintain the flow of the process being described

Labelling Diagrams

Diagram labelling tasks test your ability to understand descriptions of physical objects, processes, or systems and identify their components. These questions require you to:

1. Study the diagram carefully to understand what it represents
2. Pay attention to how the parts are connected or related
3. Locate the section of the passage that describes the diagram
4. Look for words in the passage that match the parts already labelled in the diagram
5. Use these labelled parts as reference points to find the missing labels
6. Ensure your answers fit logically within the context of the diagram



When approaching diagram labelling tasks, first identify words in the passage that correspond to parts already labelled in the diagram. These serve as anchors to help you locate the relevant section of text. Then look for descriptions of the unlabelled parts in relation to these known elements.

Remember that the words you need may be paraphrased in the passage. For example, in a hydropower plant diagram, "water builds up pressure" in the passage might correspond to labelling a "pressure" component in the diagram.

Time Management Strategies

Initial Skimming (3 minutes)

Quickly skim the entire passage to get a general understanding of the content, structure, and main ideas. This provides a mental map of where information is located.

Detailed Reading (12-13 minutes)

Read the passage carefully, focusing on sections relevant to the questions. Highlight or underline key information as you go.

If a particular question is taking too long, move on and return to it later if time permits. It's better to attempt all questions than to spend too much time on difficult ones and leave others unanswered.

Aim to complete each section in less than 20 minutes to ensure you have time for all three sections. Practice with timed exercises to develop your pacing skills.

Question Analysis (1 minute)

Review the questions to understand what type of information you need to find. Identify key words that will help you locate relevant sections in the passage.

Answer Completion (3-4 minutes)

Transfer your answers to the answer sheet, checking for accuracy and ensuring you've followed the word limit instructions.

Improving Your Reading Skills

Regular Reading Practice

Develop a habit of reading a variety of English texts regularly, including:

- Academic journals and research papers
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Technical manuals and instructions
- Books on diverse subjects

Reading widely exposes you to different writing styles, vocabulary, and text structures, which will help you adapt to the various passages in the IELTS test.

Vocabulary Development

Expand your vocabulary by:

- Learning word families (related forms of words)
- Studying synonyms and antonyms
- Understanding common prefixes and suffixes
- Creating a personal vocabulary journal
- Using new words in context

A strong vocabulary will help you understand paraphrases and recognize the meaning of unfamiliar words from context.

Speed Reading Exercises

Practice timed reading exercises to increase your reading speed while maintaining comprehension. Gradually reduce the time allowed for reading passages of similar length.

Grammar Review

Strengthen your understanding of English grammar to better comprehend complex sentence structures and relationships between ideas in the text.

Practice Tests

Complete full practice tests under timed conditions to build familiarity with the format and improve your time management skills.

Learning from Mistakes

Analyzing your errors in practice tests is one of the most effective ways to improve your performance. When reviewing incorrect answers:

1. Reread the relevant section of the passage carefully
2. Compare your answer with the correct one
3. Identify why your answer was incorrect:
 - Did you misunderstand the question?
 - Did you miss a key paraphrase?
 - Did you exceed the word limit?
 - Did you make a spelling error?
4. Create a personal error log to track patterns in your mistakes
5. Develop specific strategies to address recurring issues



Remember that making mistakes during practice is valuable—it highlights areas where you need to improve. By systematically analyzing and addressing these weaknesses, you can significantly enhance your performance on the actual test.

If you consistently struggle with certain question types, allocate more practice time to those specific formats and develop targeted strategies for approaching them.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Exceeding Word Limits

Writing more words than specified in the instructions will result in a wrong answer, even if the content is correct. Count your words carefully and adhere strictly to the limits.

Spelling Errors

Incorrect spelling will invalidate your answer. Copy words exactly as they appear in the passage, paying close attention to spelling, hyphenation, and capitalization.

Changing Word Forms

Do not change the form of words from the passage (e.g., changing singular to plural, verb tenses, or adding prefixes/suffixes). Use the exact form as it appears in the text.

Adding Articles or Joining Words

Do not add articles (a, an, the) or join words together unless they appear that way in the passage. Write exactly what you see in the text.

Misinterpreting Instructions

Different question types have specific requirements. Read instructions carefully to understand whether you need to write words from the passage, select from options, or determine if statements are true/false.

Poor Time Management

Spending too much time on difficult questions can prevent you from attempting all questions. Move on if you're stuck and return later if time permits.

Being aware of these common mistakes can help you avoid unnecessary point losses and maximize your score on the Reading test.

Test Day Preparation

Physical Preparation

Ensure you're physically ready for the test:

- Get a good night's sleep before the test
- Eat a nutritious meal that will sustain your energy
- Arrive early to reduce stress and familiarize yourself with the venue
- Bring all required identification and materials
- Wear comfortable clothing suitable for the test environment

Mental Preparation

Develop a positive mindset for test day:

- Practice relaxation techniques to manage test anxiety
- Visualize yourself performing well on the test
- Review your personal strategies for each question type
- Remind yourself of your strengths and previous successes
- Focus on the process rather than worrying about the outcome

Essential Items

Bring pencils, erasers, and highlighters. Highlighters can be particularly useful for marking key information in the passages, but check if they're allowed at your test center.

Time Awareness

Wear a watch to keep track of time during the test. Don't rely on there being a clock in the examination room.

Answer Sheet Familiarity

Practice transferring answers to an official IELTS answer sheet before the test to ensure you're comfortable with the format.

Final Tips for Success

Read Widely

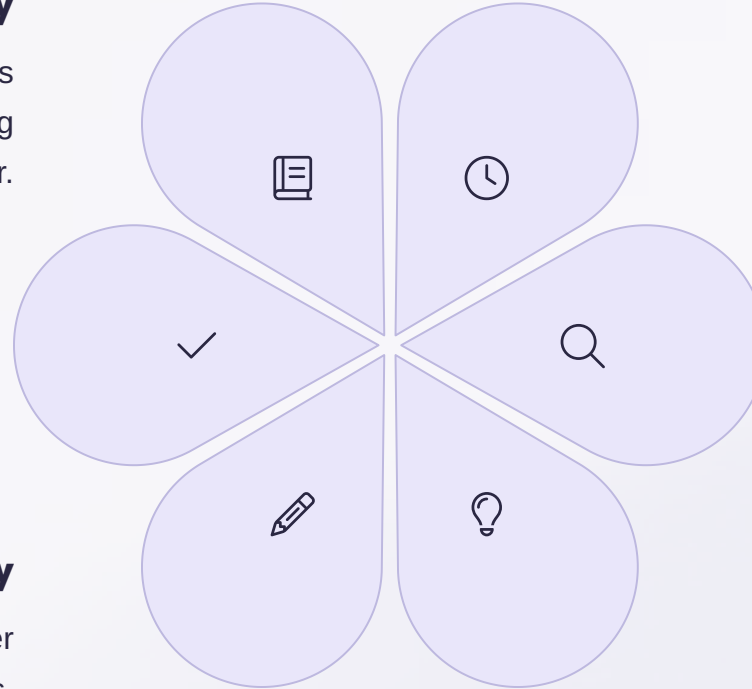
Expose yourself to a variety of English texts regularly to build familiarity with different writing styles and subject matter.

Review Your Answers

If time permits, check your answers for spelling errors, word limit compliance, and logical consistency.

Follow Instructions Precisely

Pay careful attention to word limits and other requirements specified in the instructions.



Practice Timing

Complete timed practice tests to develop your pacing and ensure you can finish all sections within the 60-minute limit.

Develop Scanning Skills

Practice quickly locating specific information in texts without reading every word.

Understand Question Types

Familiarize yourself with all possible question formats and develop specific strategies for each.

Remember that consistent practice is key to improving your reading skills. Each time you practice, you build not only your language abilities but also your confidence and test-taking strategies. With dedicated preparation and the right approach, you can achieve your target score on the IELTS Reading test.



IELTS Reading Skills 3: Understanding the main idea

This presentation covers essential reading skills for the IELTS exam, focusing on techniques to identify main ideas, understand key points, and locate specific information in reading passages. These strategies will help you tackle various question types including matching headings, multiple choice, and True/False/Not Given questions.

Understanding the Main Ideas

Key Skills

- Distinguishing main ideas from supporting ideas
- Understanding the main points
- Identifying information in a Reading passage

Question Types

- Matching headings
- Multiple choice
- True / False / Not Given

These skills are essential for navigating the IELTS Reading paper effectively. By mastering these techniques, you'll be able to quickly identify the core message of each paragraph and distinguish between main ideas and supporting details.

Matching Headings: Step-by-Step Approach

Read the Headings

Familiarise yourself with all the headings before looking at the passage.

Skim the Passage

Get the overall meaning of the text before focusing on individual paragraphs.

Analyse Each Paragraph

Read the paragraph and identify potential headings that might match.

Select the Best Match

Re-read the paragraph and choose the heading that best summarises the main idea.

Repeat the Process

Continue with the remaining paragraphs until all are matched.

Common Mistakes in Matching Headings

⊗ Test Tip

Don't try to match words in the headings to words in the passage. You need to focus on the whole idea of each paragraph.

What to Avoid

- Matching individual words rather than ideas
- Focusing only on the first or last sentence
- Choosing a heading that only covers part of the paragraph
- Rushing without carefully considering all options

Best Practices

- Create a shortlist of possible headings
- Eliminate obviously incorrect options first
- Consider the paragraph as a whole
- Check that your chosen heading covers the main idea

Multiple Choice Questions: Understanding Main Points

Multiple choice questions often require you to carefully read more than one sentence in the paragraph to identify the main point.

Read the Question Carefully

Understand exactly what the question is asking before looking at the options.

Analyse All Options

Consider each option against the text, looking for evidence that supports or contradicts it.

Look Beyond Single Sentences

The answer may span multiple sentences or require understanding the relationship between ideas.

Eliminate Wrong Answers

Cross out options that are clearly incorrect based on the passage.

True / False / Not Given Questions

For these questions, you need to determine whether statements agree with the information in the text, contradict it, or if there's no information given.

TRUE

The statement agrees with the information in the text. The information matches exactly what is stated or can be directly inferred.

FALSE

The statement contradicts the information in the text. There is information in the passage that directly opposes the statement.

NOT GIVEN

You cannot say whether the statement is true or false because there is no information about this in the text.

-  Remember that you are being tested on your ability to understand the information in the passage. Ignore anything you already know about the topic.

Example: Urban Heat Passage Analysis

Consider this statement from the Urban Heat passage:

"Luke Howard invented the term 'Urban Heat Island'."

The relevant text states: "In 1818, Luke Howard published The Climate of London in which he identified an emerging problem: urban development was having a direct impact on the local weather... We now refer to these areas as Urban Heat Islands."

Analysis

The passage states that Howard identified the problem and that "we now refer to these areas as Urban Heat Islands." It doesn't state that Howard invented this term.

Therefore, this statement is **NOT GIVEN**.

This example demonstrates how carefully you must read the text to avoid making assumptions based on information that isn't explicitly stated.

IELTS Reading Skills 4:

Locating and Matching Information

For matching information tasks, you need to locate specific ideas or pieces of information in the text and match them to phrases that accurately describe them.

1 Identify the Type of Information

Understand what kind of information you're looking for (e.g., a description, a method, findings, etc.)

2 Scan for Key Words

Look for words related to the information type, but don't just match individual words

3 Read the Context

Once you locate potential information, read the surrounding text to confirm it matches

4 Check All Paragraphs

Remember that matching information questions are not in the same order as the passage

Types of Information to Identify



Research Methods

How a study was conducted or an experiment was performed



Findings or Results

The outcomes or discoveries from research or experiments



Comparisons

Differences between current and past studies or approaches



Habitat Descriptions

Details about where animals or plants live and their environment



Process Descriptions

Explanations of how something works or functions



Time References

Information about durations or time periods needed for processes

Example: Gecko Study Analysis

Question: Which paragraph contains...

"visual evidence of the gecko's ability to resist water"

To answer this, you need to:

1. Understand that "visual evidence" means something the researchers have seen
2. Look for descriptions of observations about geckos and water
3. Scan each paragraph for this specific type of information

Analysis Process

When scanning the passage, you would find in paragraph D:

"...the team observed that the gecko's feet remained remarkably dry due to the water-repellent nature of their toe pads..."

This is visual evidence (something observed) of the gecko's ability to resist water (water-repellent nature).

Therefore, the answer would be paragraph D.



Connecting Ideas: Matching Sentence Endings

For matching sentence endings, you need to understand how ideas are connected within the reading passage.



Locate Information

Scan the passage to find where the sentence beginning appears or where the topic is discussed



Read Carefully

Examine the context around the information to understand the complete idea



Match Logically

Choose the ending that completes the idea in a way that matches the passage



Verify Grammar

Ensure the complete sentence is grammatically correct and makes logical sense

Example: Gecko Research Sentence Matching

Sentence Beginning:

"Other researchers have aimed to discover how..."

Relevant Passage Text:

"A lot of gecko studies look at the very small adhesive structures on their toes to understand how the system works at the most basic level"

Analysis:

The passage indicates that previous researchers focused on understanding the fundamental mechanism of how geckos grip surfaces.

Correct Ending:

"...the gripping mechanism of geckos actually works."

This creates a complete sentence that accurately reflects the information in the passage about what other researchers have studied.

- ❗ When matching sentence endings, always check that the complete sentence maintains the same meaning as the original passage and doesn't introduce new information.

Key Strategies for IELTS Reading Success

Time Management

Allocate your time wisely across all passages. Spend approximately 20 minutes on each passage. Don't get stuck on difficult questions.

Skim and Scan

Skim read for overall meaning first, then scan for specific information. This two-step approach saves time and improves accuracy.

Question Analysis

Understand exactly what each question is asking before searching for the answer. Identify the type of information required.

Answer Checking

Always verify your answers against the passage. Ensure they are supported by the text, not your own knowledge.



Common Pitfalls to Avoid

1

Relying on Prior Knowledge

Base your answers solely on the passage, not what you already know about the topic. The exam tests your comprehension of the text, not your general knowledge.

2

Word Matching

Don't just match words from the questions to words in the passage. Focus on understanding the meaning and ideas being expressed.

3

Overlooking Plurals

Pay attention to plurals in questions (e.g., "two examples of"). You need to find all instances mentioned, not just one.

4

Assuming Information

For True/False/Not Given questions, don't assume information that isn't explicitly stated in the passage. Stick strictly to what is written.

Summary: Mastering IELTS Reading Skills

Key Skills Covered

- Identifying main ideas and supporting details
- Matching headings to paragraphs
- Answering multiple choice questions
- Determining True/False/Not Given statements
- Locating and matching specific information
- Connecting ideas through sentence completion

Next Steps

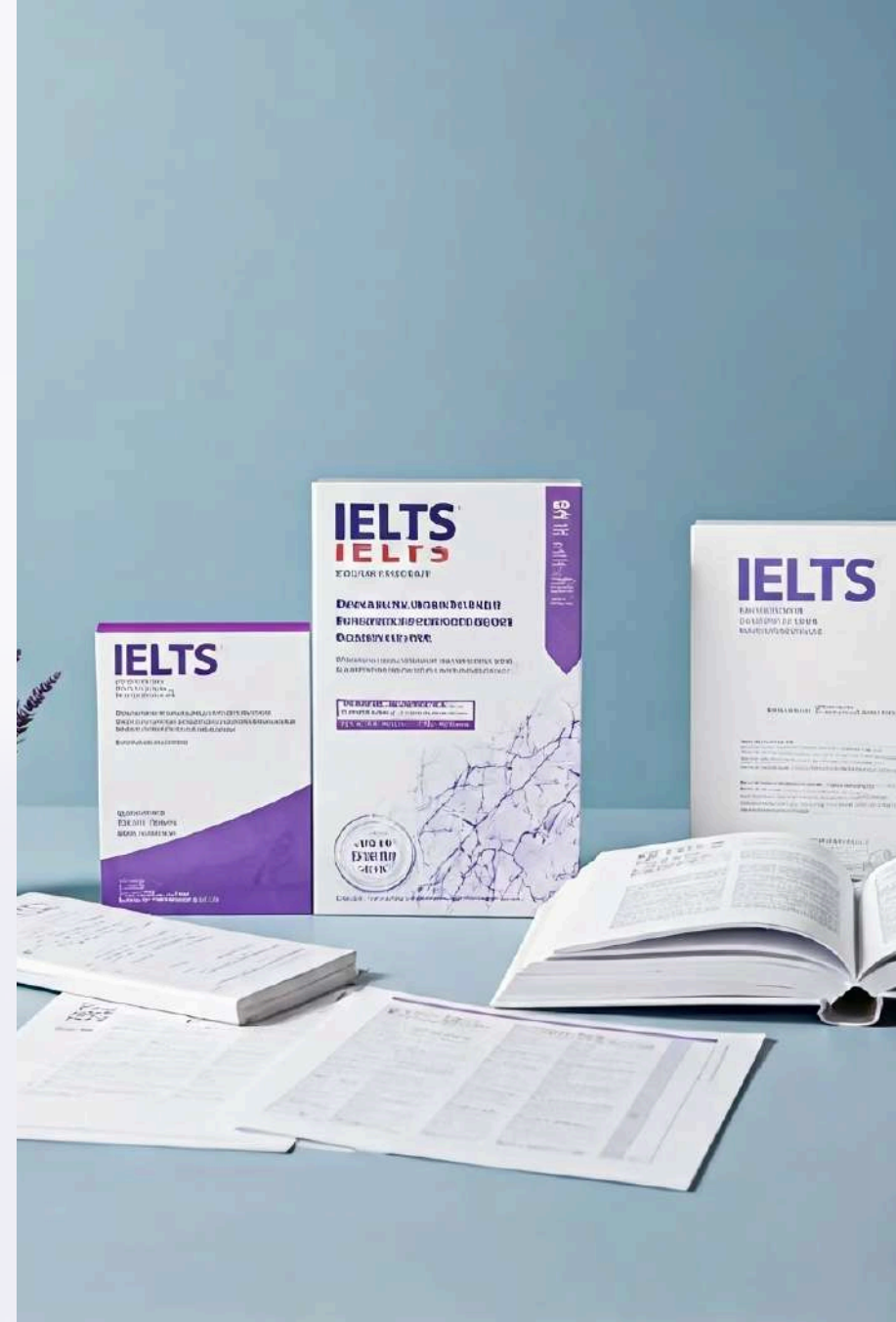
To improve your IELTS Reading skills:

1. Practice regularly with timed exercises
2. Review and learn from your mistakes
3. Build your vocabulary through wide reading
4. Apply the strategies covered in this presentation
5. Take full-length practice tests to build stamina

Remember that success in the IELTS Reading module comes from a combination of careful reading, strategic approach to different question types, and efficient time management.

Reading skill 5: Discursive passages

This comprehensive guide will help you develop essential skills for the IELTS Reading section, focusing on discursive passages and multiple-choice questions. We'll explore techniques for identifying theories and opinions, matching features, and understanding the writer's purpose. By mastering these strategies, you'll be better equipped to tackle complex reading tasks and improve your overall IELTS score.



Understanding Discursive Passages

Discursive passages in the IELTS Reading paper gradually increase in difficulty. They often present contrasting arguments or explain complex theories, using cohesive devices to connect ideas throughout the text.

What are Discursive Passages?

Discursive passages present arguments, theories, or explanations in a structured manner. They typically contain:

- Contrasting points in an argument
- Explanations of complex theories
- Multiple perspectives on a topic
- Cohesive devices that connect ideas

Why are They Important?

Mastering discursive passages is crucial because:

- They appear frequently in the more difficult sections of the IELTS Reading test
- They require higher-level comprehension skills
- Understanding how ideas connect helps you follow complex arguments
- They prepare you for academic reading in English-speaking universities

As you progress through the IELTS Reading paper, the passages become more challenging, requiring you to understand how ideas are connected and to follow complex arguments across multiple paragraphs. Recognizing cohesive devices is essential for navigating these texts effectively.

Cohesive Devices: The Glue of Discursive Passages

Cohesive devices are words or phrases that connect ideas within a text. They help readers understand the relationship between different parts of a passage and follow the writer's argument.

1

To Add More / Clarify a Point

- moreover
- furthermore
- in addition
- indeed
- in fact
- similarly

2

To Show Contrast / Present the Opposite View

- although
- despite
- in spite of
- nonetheless
- whilst
- though

3

To Give an Example

- such as
- for instance
- to illustrate this

4

To Draw a Conclusion / Introduce a Result

- therefore
- consequently
- thus
- as a result
- hence

Recognizing these cohesive devices helps you understand the logical flow of a passage and predict what information might come next. In the IELTS Reading test, this skill is particularly valuable for answering questions that require you to follow an argument or identify the writer's purpose.

- ☐ When reading complex passages, pay special attention to transition words that signal a shift in the argument or the introduction of a new perspective. These are often key points that questions will focus on.

Case Study: "Aesop's Fable 'The Crow and the Pitcher'"

The passage about rooks and their problem-solving abilities demonstrates how cohesive devices are used in academic texts. This scientific study confirms that the fictional account in Aesop's fable has a basis in reality.

Key cohesive devices found in the passage include:

- **In fact** - used to clarify that rooks can actually solve problems like in the fable
- **Although** - showing contrast between folklore and empirical testing
- **In addition** - adding information about the birds' accuracy
- **Furthermore** - adding more details about their estimation abilities
- **Therefore** - introducing a conclusion about the rooks' understanding of materials
- **Despite** - contrasting their abilities with their behavior in the wild



The study demonstrates that rooks can use tools to solve problems, just like in Aesop's fable. They showed remarkable intelligence by:

- Using stones to raise water levels to reach food
- Selecting larger stones over smaller ones
- Distinguishing between materials (water vs. sawdust)
- Estimating the number of stones needed

This research highlights that corvids (crow family) rival great apes in their problem-solving abilities, despite having very different brain structures.

The passage illustrates how scientific writing uses cohesive devices to build a logical argument, present evidence, and draw conclusions. Understanding these connections helps you answer questions about the relationships between different ideas in the text.

Identifying Theories and Opinions

Academic texts often contain theories or views from different experts. Recognizing when a writer is presenting someone else's opinion rather than their own is a crucial skill for the IELTS Reading test.

Direct Quotations

These are easily recognized by quotation marks:

Christopher Bird stated: 'Corvids are remarkably intelligent, and in many ways rival the great apes in their physical intelligence and ability to solve problems.'

Reporting Verbs

These verbs signal that the writer is presenting someone else's view:

- **Highlighted:** "Christopher Bird highlighted the importance of the findings..."
- **Stated:** "Christopher Bird stated that corvids are remarkably intelligent..."
- **Believes:** "Christopher Bird believes that corvids are remarkably intelligent..."
- **Remarkd:** "Wild tool use appears to be dependent on motivation," remarked Bird.
- **Noted:** "As Bird noted, that fits nicely with Aesop's maxim..."

Other Indicators

Look for phrases that attribute ideas to specific people:

- **According to:** "According to the team..."
- **In the view of:** "In the view of researchers..."
- **As X suggests:** "As Bird suggests..."

When answering questions about theories or opinions in a passage, pay close attention to who is expressing each view. The writer may present multiple perspectives without necessarily agreeing with all of them. Reporting verbs and attribution phrases help you identify whose opinion is being presented.

 **Study Tip:** When reading academic articles, practice identifying when the author is presenting their own views versus when they are reporting someone else's. This will help you distinguish between facts and opinions in the IELTS Reading test.

Matching Features Tasks

Matching features tasks are common in the IELTS Reading test. They require you to match statements to people, places, years, or things mentioned in the passage. These tasks test your ability to locate specific information and understand paraphrased content.

Scan for Names

First, scan the passage to locate all instances of the names or features listed in the task. Highlight or underline them to make them easier to find when answering questions.

Match with Paraphrased Statements

The statements in the questions will usually paraphrase (not directly quote) the information in the passage. Look for synonyms and restructured sentences that express the same idea.

Read Surrounding Context

Once you've located a name, read the surrounding sentences carefully to understand what theory, opinion, or action is attributed to that person or feature.

Check for Distractors

Be aware that some names in the list may be distractors that don't match any of the statements. Similarly, some statements may refer to comments made about a person rather than by them.

❌ Test Tip: For matching features tasks, the questions will not be in the same order as in the passage. The people mentioned may appear in several different sections. You need to scan the whole passage carefully.

Matching features tasks require careful reading and the ability to recognize when information is being paraphrased. Practice identifying the key points associated with each name or feature in a passage to improve your performance on these questions.

Case Study: Language Evolution Research

The passage about language evolution presents theories from different researchers (Lieberman, Pagel, and Gray) on why some words persist over time while others change rapidly.

Key findings from the researchers:

- **Lieberman:** Studied English irregular verbs and found that frequently used irregular verbs remain irregular longer. The half-life of an irregular verb is proportional to the square root of its frequency.
- **Pagel:** Studied 87 Indo-European languages and found that some words (like "two") maintain similar sounds across languages and time, while others (like "bird") vary greatly.
- **Gray:** Commented on both findings, noting the "remarkable regularities in the processes of language change" despite historical variations.



The research reveals fascinating patterns in language evolution:

- Words used frequently change more slowly over time
- Some words maintain similar sounds across many languages (e.g., words for "two")
- Irregular verbs can "regularize" over time (e.g., "holp" becoming "helped")
- The rate of change follows mathematical patterns
- Despite cultural differences, languages evolve according to similar principles

This passage demonstrates how academic texts present multiple researchers' perspectives on a topic. To answer matching features questions correctly, you need to identify which theories or findings are attributed to each researcher, even when the information is paraphrased in the questions.

-  **Study Tip:** Look online or find out if your local library has copies of international newspapers and magazines. Read the Education, Health or Science sections of newspapers such as The Times, The Guardian, The Australian, The New Zealand Herald, The New Yorker and The Washington Post for reports on academic studies.

Reading skill 6: Multiple-choice questions

Multiple-choice questions in the IELTS Reading test come in different formats and test various aspects of reading comprehension. Understanding the types of questions and developing strategies for each is essential for success.

1

Direct Questions with Four Options

These questions ask a specific question followed by four possible answers.

Example: "According to the paragraph, what point do linguists have different views on?"

Strategy: Identify the key words in the question, locate the relevant section in the passage, and eliminate incorrect options.

2

Incomplete Sentences with Four Endings

These provide an incomplete sentence that you must complete by selecting the correct ending.

Example: "The research showed that dolphins..."

Strategy: Read the stem carefully, predict a possible ending, then match with the options.

3

Multiple Answers Required

These ask you to select two or more correct answers from a list of options.

Example: "Which TWO possible issues did Miller believe may have caused the rise in dolphin numbers?"

Strategy: Carefully read the relevant section to identify all factors mentioned, then match with the options.

4

Writer's Purpose Questions

These ask about the writer's intention, opinion, or attitude.

Example: "What is the writer's purpose in this paragraph?"

Strategy: Consider the tone, language choices, and overall message to determine the writer's perspective.

Multiple-choice questions often require you to understand more than just the surface meaning of the text. You may need to make inferences, identify the writer's tone, or understand implied relationships between ideas.

Strategies for Multiple-Choice Questions

Before Reading the Options

- Read the question carefully to understand what you're looking for
- Identify key words in the question
- Locate the relevant section in the passage
- Try to answer the question in your own words before looking at the options

When Reading the Options

- Eliminate obviously incorrect answers
- Be careful of options that are partially correct
- Watch for distractors that use words from the passage but in a different context
- Check for qualifiers (always, never, all, some) that might make an option incorrect

For Writer's Purpose Questions

- Pay attention to the writer's tone (positive, negative, neutral)
- Look for evaluative language that reveals the writer's attitude
- Consider the overall message the writer is trying to convey
- Think about what the writer wants the reader to understand or believe

For Multiple Answer Questions

- Read the entire relevant section before selecting answers
- Make sure you select exactly the number of answers required
- Check that each selected answer is supported by the text
- Verify that your selected answers don't contradict each other

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- Selecting an answer based on your own knowledge rather than the passage
- Choosing an option because it contains words from the passage without checking the meaning
- Missing subtle differences between similar-sounding options
- Not reading all options before making your selection

Remember that multiple-choice questions in the IELTS Reading test are designed to test your comprehension of the passage, not your general knowledge. Always base your answers on what is stated or implied in the text, not on what you know or believe to be true.

Case Study: What Do Hurricanes Mean for Dolphins?

The passage about dolphins and Hurricane Katrina presents an interesting case for multiple-choice questions. It discusses how a hurricane, typically associated with devastation, led to an increase in dolphin births.



First Factor

"If a large number of calves perished as a result of Hurricane Katrina, this would allow for a greater percentage of females to become reproductively active the following year."

This suggests that female dolphins were able to breed earlier than usual after losing their calves during the hurricane.



Second Factor

"With a reduction in the number of boats in the water, both commercial and recreational, dolphins may have been able to spend more time eating, and less time travelling or diving in an effort to avoid boats."

This indicates that dolphins had less contact with humans (boats) after the hurricane, allowing them more time to feed and breed.

For the multiple-choice question "Which TWO possible issues did Miller believe may have caused the rise in dolphin numbers?", the correct answers would be:

- Female dolphins were able to breed earlier than usual.
- The dolphins had less contact with humans after the hurricane.

This example demonstrates how multiple-choice questions often require you to identify specific details from the passage and match them with paraphrased options. The key is to locate the relevant sections that discuss the factors and understand how they relate to the question.

Identifying a Writer's Purpose

Some multiple-choice questions ask you to identify the writer's purpose, opinion, or attitude. These questions require you to understand not just what the writer is saying, but why they are saying it and how they feel about it.

Writer's Purpose

The reason why the writer has included a particular piece of information or written the passage as a whole.

Examples: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to criticize, to compare, to explain

Writer's Opinion

The writer's view or judgment on a particular topic or issue.

Examples: approval, disapproval, skepticism, neutrality, ambivalence

Writer's Tone

The attitude conveyed through the writer's choice of words and style.

Examples: formal, informal, humorous, serious, ironic, enthusiastic, critical

To identify the writer's purpose, opinion, or tone, look for:

- **Evaluative language:** Words that express judgment or assessment (e.g., "successful," "hopelessly flawed")
- **Emphasis:** What the writer chooses to highlight or repeat
- **Concessions:** When the writer acknowledges opposing views before presenting their own
- **Rhetorical questions:** Questions used to make a point rather than seek information
- **Imagery and metaphors:** Figurative language that reveals the writer's perspective

❏ In the Jurassic Park example, phrases like "blockbuster film," "hopelessly flawed," and "revel in the return of the dinosaurs" suggest that the writer appreciates the entertainment value of the story despite recognizing its scientific inaccuracies.

Case Study: Jurassic Park Analysis

One of the reasons Jurassic Park was so successful - as a novel and a blockbuster film - is that it presented a plausible way to bring dinosaurs back to life. The idea that viable dinosaur DNA might be retrieved from bloodsucking prehistoric insects seemed like a project that could actually succeed. Even though the actual methodology is hopelessly flawed and would never work, the premise was science-ish enough to let us suspend our disbelief and revel in the return of the dinosaurs.

To determine the writer's purpose and opinion in this paragraph, we need to analyze the language and tone:

- **Positive language:** "successful," "blockbuster," "plausible," "revel in"
- **Critical language:** "hopelessly flawed," "would never work"
- **Balanced perspective:** Acknowledges both the entertainment value and scientific inaccuracies

Based on this analysis, we can determine:

Writer's Purpose:

To argue that people may choose to believe the improbable in order to be entertained. The writer explains how the film's premise, while scientifically inaccurate, was convincing enough to allow audiences to enjoy the story.

This example demonstrates how writer's purpose questions require you to look beyond the literal meaning of the text to understand the writer's intentions and attitudes. By analyzing the language choices and overall message, you can determine why the writer included certain information and how they feel about the topic.



Writer's Opinion:

In spite of its inaccuracies, it was a successful novel and film. The writer appreciates how the story balanced scientific plausibility with entertainment value, even while recognizing that the science wouldn't actually work.

Practical Tips for IELTS Reading Success



Time Management

Allocate your time wisely across all passages. Spend about 20 minutes on each passage. If you get stuck on a question, move on and come back to it later if you have time.



Skimming and Scanning

Skim the passage first to get the main idea, then scan for specific information when answering questions. This is more efficient than reading every word in detail.



Highlighting Key Information

Mark names, dates, and key terms as you read. This makes it easier to locate specific information when answering questions, especially for matching features tasks.



Regular Practice

Read academic articles, science magazines, and quality newspapers regularly to familiarize yourself with the style and vocabulary of IELTS Reading passages.



Answer All Questions

There is no penalty for wrong answers, so always provide an answer even if you're unsure. Make an educated guess based on the information in the passage.



Check Your Answers

If you have time at the end, review your answers to catch any careless mistakes or misunderstandings. Verify that your answers are supported by the text.

Developing these skills takes practice. Set aside regular time to work on IELTS Reading practice tests and analyze your mistakes to identify patterns and areas for improvement. Remember that understanding the structure and purpose of different question types is just as important as comprehending the passages themselves.

- ✔ Study Tip: Create a vocabulary notebook specifically for academic and formal words you encounter in practice passages. Group words by topic (e.g., science, history, business) to help you recognize them more easily in the test.

Building Your Reading Skills Beyond IELTS

Expand Your Reading Materials

Don't limit yourself to IELTS practice tests. Read widely from sources such as:

- Quality newspapers (The Guardian, The Times, The New York Times)
- Science magazines (New Scientist, Scientific American)
- Academic journals in your field of interest
- Non-fiction books on various topics

Active Reading Techniques

Engage with what you read by:

- Summarizing main points in your own words
- Identifying the writer's purpose and tone
- Noting how ideas are connected through cohesive devices
- Creating questions about the content

Vocabulary Development

Build your academic vocabulary by:

- Creating word families (noun, verb, adjective, adverb forms)
- Learning collocations (words that commonly appear together)
- Studying synonyms and antonyms
- Using new words in your writing and speaking

The reading skills you develop for the IELTS test will serve you well beyond the exam. They are essential for academic study, professional development, and lifelong learning. By continuing to read widely and critically, you'll not only improve your IELTS score but also enhance your ability to engage with complex ideas in English.

 Remember that reading is a skill that improves with practice. Set aside time each day to read something challenging in English, even if it's just for 15-20 minutes. Over time, you'll notice significant improvements in your comprehension, speed, and vocabulary.



Critical Thinking

Develop your analytical skills by:

- Evaluating arguments and evidence
- Identifying bias and assumptions
- Comparing different perspectives on the same topic
- Distinguishing between facts and opinions

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

4

Key Reading Skills

Identifying cohesive devices, recognizing theories and opinions, matching features, and understanding the writer's purpose are essential for IELTS Reading success.

15

Practice Hours

Aim for at least 15 hours of focused reading practice before your IELTS test, working with a variety of passage types and question formats.

60

Minutes

Remember that you have exactly 60 minutes to complete all three passages in the IELTS Reading test, so time management is crucial.

In this comprehensive guide, we've explored strategies for tackling discursive passages and multiple-choice questions in the IELTS Reading test. By understanding cohesive devices, identifying theories and opinions, mastering matching features tasks, and recognizing the writer's purpose, you'll be better equipped to handle the challenges of the test.

Remember that success in IELTS Reading comes from a combination of language skills, test strategies, and regular practice. Continue to develop your vocabulary, improve your reading speed, and familiarize yourself with different question types to build your confidence and competence.

As you prepare for your IELTS test, maintain a balanced approach that includes all four skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Each component contributes to your overall band score, so allocate your study time accordingly.

Good luck with your IELTS preparation, and remember that the reading skills you develop now will benefit you long after the test is over!

Reading skill 7: Opinions and attitudes

Welcome to this comprehensive guide on mastering the Reading section of the IELTS exam. This presentation focuses specifically on dealing with argumentative texts, identifying writers' views and claims, recognizing grammatical features, and tackling various question types including Yes/No/Not Given questions and summary completion tasks.



Unit Overview: Opinions and Attitudes

Key Skills Covered

- Dealing with argumentative texts
- Identifying a writer's views/claims
- Identifying grammatical features
- Yes/No/Not Given questions
- Summary completion with a box
- Summary completion without a box

Why These Skills Matter

The most difficult and complex texts appear in Reading Section 3. These passages often feature arguments for or against specific ideas or theories, or present discussions of different arguments. Understanding the writer's overall tone and attitude is crucial for success.

This presentation will guide you through practical exercises and strategies to master these challenging aspects of the IELTS Reading test.

Argumentative Texts: Understanding Tone

A writer's choice of words often indicates their attitude towards a topic. Recognizing positive and negative tone is essential for understanding argumentative texts.

Positive Tone Indicators

- Diverse
- Unspoilt
- Accomplished
- Productive
- Realistic
- Sophisticated
- Efficient
- Thorough
- Influential
- Prominent

Negative Tone Indicators

- Disastrous
- Biased
- Vulnerable
- Confusing
- Irrelevant
- Harsh
- Catastrophic
- Monotonous
- Distorted
- Dated

Being able to categorize adjectives as positive or negative helps you identify the writer's perspective and attitude in argumentative texts.

Case Study: "Living with Mies"



Lafayette Park is a group of modernist townhouses in Detroit designed by architect Mies van der Rohe. The development represents a successful urban renewal project from the post-war era.

This text contains numerous adjectives that indicate the writer's attitude, such as "austere uniformity," "beautiful housing options," and "cavernous loft-conversion space." Identifying these helps understand the writer's perspective.

Key Points from the Text

- Designed by a trio of world-class designers: Ludwig Hilbersheimer, Alfred Caldwell, and Mies van der Rohe
- Built between 1958 and 1962 on land previously occupied by a working-class neighborhood
- Remained economically stable despite Detroit's population decline
- One of the most racially integrated neighborhoods in the city
- Residents have a casual attitude toward the architecture

Identifying the Writer's Views/Claims

1

Views vs. Claims

A **view** is a personal opinion, while a **claim** is a statement presented as fact. Understanding this distinction is crucial for Yes/No/Not Given questions.

2

Yes/No/Not Given Questions

These questions ask whether statements match the writer's views or claims. Unlike True/False/Not Given questions which focus on factual information, these require interpretation of the writer's perspective.

3

Answering Strategy

- YES - if the statement agrees with the writer's views
- NO - if the statement contradicts the writer's views
- NOT GIVEN - if it's impossible to determine the writer's opinion

Practice identifying whether statements are views or claims to improve your ability to answer Yes/No/Not Given questions accurately.

Examples from "Living with Mies"

Claims (Presented as Facts)

- "Like hundreds of developments nationwide, they were the result of post-war urban renewal."
- "While much of Detroit began a steep decline soon after, Lafayette Park stayed afloat."
- "There is a kind of austere uniformity to the Lafayette Park townhouses when viewed from the outside."

Views (Personal Opinions)

- "Detroit has an abundance of beautiful housing options."
- "Indeed, the best design doesn't force a personality on its residents."
- "The homes are great because they work, not because they come affixed with a famous name."

When answering Yes/No/Not Given questions, you must determine whether the statement in the question aligns with, contradicts, or is not addressed by the writer's views or claims in the passage.

Identifying Grammatical Features

Understanding grammar is essential for summary completion tasks, which come in two forms: with a box of possible answers or without a box (where you select words directly from the passage).

Summary Completion with a Box

The options may be actual words from the passage or synonyms. You need to:

- Identify the word type needed (noun, verb, adjective, etc.)
- Understand the summary's grammatical structure
- Choose the word that accurately completes each gap

Summary Completion without a Box

You must select words directly from the passage. You need to:

- Consider the grammatical features of the summary
- Locate the relevant section in the passage
- Choose words that accurately complete the summary

A summary consists of complete, grammatically connected sentences, not just notes. This requires careful reading and understanding of both the summary and the passage.

Case Study: Meerkat Study



Key Findings

- Meerkats are highly social mongooses that live in large groups
- They take turns foraging for food and standing guard
- Different meerkat troops have their own traditions
- Subordinate juvenile members are the most innovative when foraging
- Low-ranking males were best at solving problems

Dr. Alex Thornton from the University of Cambridge led a study into meerkat society, examining their social behaviors and problem-solving abilities.

This passage tests your ability to complete a summary by selecting appropriate words from the text. You must identify what type of word is needed for each gap and locate the corresponding information in the passage.

Reading skill 8: General Training Reading

The IELTS General Training Reading paper differs from the Academic Reading paper in its content and structure, though the question types remain the same.

1

Section 1: Social Survival

Contains up to five short factual texts related to everyday life, such as:

- Train timetables
- Shop advertisements
- Opening times

2

Section 2: Workplace Survival

Features two work-related texts that are descriptive and informational:

- Staff training manuals
- Job descriptions
- Job application procedures

3

Section 3: General Reading

Contains one longer text that is descriptive and instructive:

- Magazine articles
- Travel brochures
- Extracts from novels

The passages gradually increase in difficulty from Section 1 to Section 3. You have 60 minutes to complete 40 questions across all three sections.

Section 1: Social Survival Texts

Example: Recycling Information

Section 1 often contains practical information texts like recycling guidelines. These texts test your ability to:

- Scan for specific details
- Recognize paraphrased information
- Answer short-answer questions
- Complete sentences using words from the passage
- Identify true, false, or not given information

When answering questions about these texts, you need to:

- Scan quickly for specific information like numbers or dates
- Identify paraphrases of words in the passage
- Write only the required number of words
- Copy spelling correctly from the passage



Remember: For short-answer questions, you don't need to write full sentences or join words together. Just write the exact words from the passage that answer the question.

Dealing with Multiple Texts

Section 1 may contain multiple short texts on a similar topic. You need to scan all texts to locate specific information.



Example: University Open Days

Multiple texts about different university open days require you to scan for specific details like activities, food options, and entertainment across all texts.

When dealing with multiple texts, it's important to quickly identify which text contains the information needed to answer each question. Underline the parts of the texts that give you your answers to confirm your choices.



Scanning Strategy

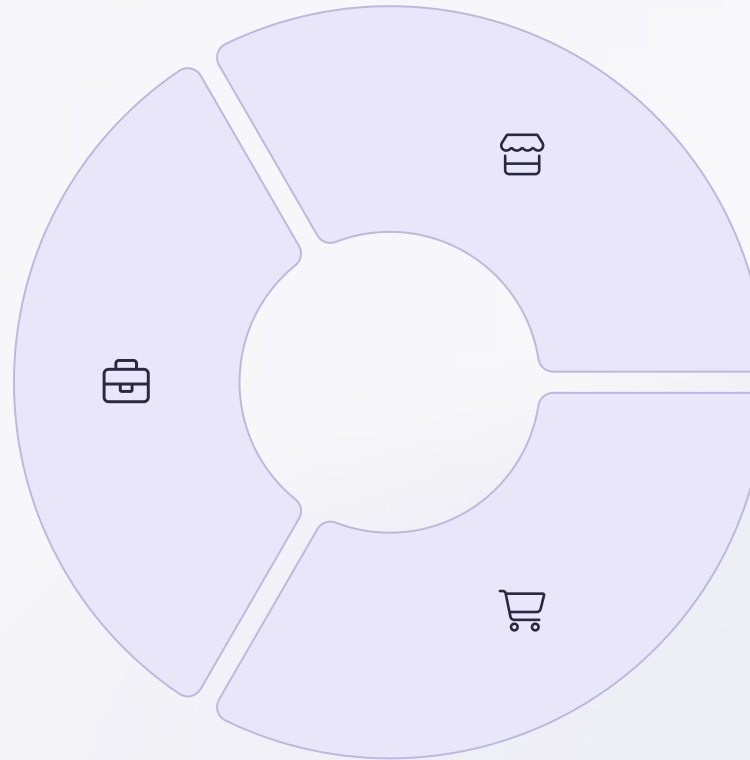
Look for key words in the questions that might appear in the texts. Be aware that questions may use paraphrases rather than exact wording from the texts.

Work-Related Vocabulary

Section 2 of the General Training Reading paper contains work-related texts. Familiarity with workplace vocabulary is essential for success.

Employment Terms

- Employee: a staff member
- Employer: the person who provides work
- Recruit: to hire or employ a person
- Redundancy: loss of job due to business closing



Industry Terms

- Retail: industry related to shops
- Hospitality: industry related to hotels and restaurants
- Manual: work done with hands
- Shift: scheduled period of work

Consumer Terms

- Customer: person who buys goods
- Consumer: person who uses goods
- Deadline: time by which work must be completed
- Retire: to stop working, usually due to age

Understanding these terms will help you comprehend work-related texts and answer questions accurately in Section 2.

Section 2: Workplace Health and Safety

Example: Workplace Inspection

Section 2 often contains detailed information about workplace procedures. This example focuses on workplace health and safety inspections, covering:

- Inspector training and powers
- What to expect during an inspection
- Documentation requirements
- Consequences of non-compliance

Question types for these texts include:

- Multiple-choice questions
- Flow-chart completion
- Summary completion

For flow-chart completion tasks, you need to identify the relevant part of the passage and select the appropriate word to fill each gap.



Remember: If asked to choose ONE WORD ONLY from the passage, make sure you don't add extra information such as adjectives or adverbs. Writing more than one word will result in an incorrect answer.

Section 3: Banned Branding in São Paulo



Key Aspects of the Case

- 15,000 billboards were removed across the city
- Initial resistance from marketing executives and advertisers
- Concerns about aesthetic impact and economic consequences
- Adaptation by advertisers to new environment
- Unexpected benefits including cultural heritage visibility
- 70% public approval rate

Case Study Overview

In 2007, São Paulo became the first major city to ban all outdoor advertising under the "Clean City Law" initiated by Mayor Gilberto Kassab to combat "visual pollution."

This longer, more complex passage tests your ability to match information to specific paragraphs and identify who said what in the text. These skills require careful reading and the ability to locate specific details within a lengthy passage.

Key Strategies for IELTS Reading Success

60

Minutes

Total time for the Reading test. Aim to spend less than 20 minutes on each section to have time to check your answers.

40

Questions

Total number of questions to answer across all three sections of the General Training Reading paper.

15-20

Minutes

Recommended time for Section 1, allowing more time for the more difficult texts in Sections 2 and 3.

Final Tips

- Quickly read the whole passage before answering questions to get the general idea
- Use the title of summaries to help locate relevant parts of the passage
- For Yes/No/Not Given questions, focus only on what the passage says, not your own knowledge
- When scanning for information, look for key words that might appear in the text
- Be aware that questions may use paraphrases rather than exact wording from the texts
- Practice identifying different types of questions and the appropriate strategies for each

Remember: Success in IELTS Reading comes from a combination of vocabulary knowledge, grammar understanding, and effective test-taking strategies.