

Reading reference

How to do a reading task

General tips

Before the task

- Look at the title of the text and any pictures.
- What do you already know about these topics? Can you think of any useful topic-related vocabulary?
- Underline key words and ideas in the questions.
- What kind of information do you need to find to answer them? For example, *an opinion, a number, etc.*

The first time you read

- Think about what kind of text you're reading. For example, is it *an article, a report, a review*?
- Think about *why* someone has written the text. Who is it for? What kind of information or message does the writer want to get across?
- Try to work out the gist (the main ideas).
- Don't look up every new word in a dictionary! You don't need to understand every word to work out the main topics.
- Use the organization of the text to help you. Writers usually use a new paragraph for each important new idea. The first sentence of each new paragraph often gives you clues about the main topic.
- If you aren't sure of the right English word or phrase, try to think of other ways to express the same ideas.
- Some people find it helpful to write a short summary or list of notes after they've read a text for the first time.

The next time you read

- Read *all* the instructions and questions carefully before you read the text again.
- Underline key words. These are usually verbs and nouns. Watch out for any negative forms (*don't, never, etc.*) and qualifying expressions (*nearly everyone, more than half, etc.*). These can be very important.
- Read again for the specific information you need to answer the questions. You can read the text as many times as you like (or have time for!).
- Sometimes the information you need to answer a question might be in more than one sentence in the text, so read carefully.
- Don't just look for keywords. The writer may not use exactly the same language as the questions. Look for synonyms and paraphrases.
- Remember that you must *always* find evidence in the text. Don't just guess! You might find it useful to underline evidence that supports your answers as you read.
- If you have time, read your answers carefully afterwards. Do they make sense? Are they clear and easy to read?

Dealing with new vocabulary

- You can often guess the meanings of new words and expressions without using a dictionary.

Working out the part of speech

- Think about common suffixes. For example: *-ly* for adverbs, *-ing, -ed, -ful, -less, -ive, etc.* for adjectives.
- Be careful: some word forms are irregular. For example, *lovely* is an adjective, not an adverb.
- Always pay attention to the way a writer uses a word in a sentence.

Working out the meaning

- Some words are *cognates* (they have similar meanings to words in your language).
- Be careful: some words are *false friends* (they look like cognates but they have different meanings). For example, *parent* means 'a mother or a father'.
- Remember that negative prefixes like *un-, im-* and *il-* change a word into its opposite.
- Read the whole sentence carefully for clues about what the word or expression might mean.
- Can you think of another word or expression that would fit in the sentence with a similar meaning?

Answering questions

- Check the instructions. Can you give short answers or do you need to answer in full sentences?
- You will usually find the answers in the text in the same order as the questions.
- Think about different ways to express the same ideas.
- Use your own words. Try not to copy too much language from the text.
- Check your grammar and spelling carefully afterwards.

Choosing true or false

- Check the instructions. Do you need to correct the false sentences, or just write *true* or *false*?
- You will usually find the answers in the text in the same order as the sentences in the task.
- Look for information which supports or contradicts the ideas in the sentences. You may need to look for synonyms and paraphrases.
- Does a sentence *exactly* match the meaning in the text? Consider every part of the sentence.
- If you have to correct false sentences, check your grammar and spelling carefully afterwards.