

## IELTS Reading Test 1 – Teacher's notes

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### Aim

To help students prepare for the Academic Reading component of the IELTS exam.

### Objectives

To help students to:

- Practise doing an academic Reading Test in exam conditions.
- Develop techniques for answering questions efficiently in the academic.
- Reading component.
- Complete answer sheets correctly.
- Develop techniques that can be applied in all reading tests.

### Level of the exercises

**Reading Test 1** may be used with students who are IELTS Score band 5 and upwards.

### Materials

The materials (all PDFs) consist of:

- Teacher's notes
- Reading Test 1
- Answer key
- Answer sheet

### Methodology

Reading Test 1 – to be taken under exam conditions.

### Pre-reading advice

Before you give a class the test, there are several pieces of advice you can give to the students. Depending on the level of the students and how much reading training has been done, you may want to focus on one or more of the points below.

### Hints for students

1. Do not read the whole passage in detail first. The passages are quite long and are not really designed to be studied in detail. Students often make the mistake of reading a passage thoroughly and underlining every word they do not know. The Reading Test in the Academic IELTS is a 'superficial' exercise, in that candidates are required to extract words and meaning at speed. Therefore, those students who read the passages in detail are at a serious disadvantage. (If students insist on reading the entire passage, tell them to skim and underline organizational words. If they spend more than one or two minutes skimming a single passage, they are wasting time.)
2. Look at the title of Reading Passage 1, if there is one.
3. Read, the instructions and questions carefully.
4. Ensure that you understand exactly what is required in each set of instructions. For example, is one word required or more than one word? Can a word/ heading be used more than once?
5. Remember that the questions will give a summary of the content within a passage. This will help even if there is no title.
6. Read one set of questions and then locate and answer those questions. Completion of one set of questions should help you to find those in the next set. The questions/ answers are usually in order, so locating the answers to the first and last question in each section will usually show where the remaining answers can be found.
7. Leave questions which you are unable to answer. This is a serious problem. Students have effectively 90 seconds to locate and answer a question. If they spend three or four minutes on one question, they are throwing away the chances of a good grade. They may find one answer when looking for another. Many students find this a difficult task to do but they must be trained.
8. Avoid underlining unfamiliar words. Students instinctively want to locate and underline words and phrases they haven't seen before. This can cause confusion. They should be trained to locate and underline the words/ phrases which help with organization.
9. Repeat the process for each of the passages.
10. Always use a pencil to mark a text rather than a highlighter.

### Alternative approaches

- You may wish to elicit a set of reading rules which the students follow as a class. You can do this as a class exercise.
- You could also put the basic instructions on a chart as attached.
- You could give the chart to students in groups and ask them to discuss which point they had difficulty with and then advise each other. They can then do this briefly as a class exercise on a regular basis.
- Or you could give the chart to the students after they have done a test and ask them which items they found difficult.

### Answer sheet

Each time the students do a test make them write their answers on an answer sheet. You can find one at the back of many books or use the answer sheet at the end of these notes.

### Monitoring the Reading Test

- Use a stopwatch, if necessary, to time the test. Give the students periodic reminders of the time – every 15 or 20 minutes is enough. Remind them of the progress they should have made by this point in the test.
- Give the students extra time to finish the test, but ask them to record where they had reached after 60 minutes.
- While students are doing a reading test, go round the class and check that they are following the basic rules in the chart. For example, monitor the words/ phrases they are underlining. If you notice that they are underlining words they don't know, ask them to erase them. Guide them as to which words/ phrases will help them in reading – organizing words like *but/ yet/ however/ moreover/ as a result/ etc*, or words that relate to a particular theme.
- Check that the students are writing their answers on the answer sheet as they do the test. Remind them that this is different to the IELTS listening where they would have ten minutes at the end to transfer their answers.
- Point out that answers will be marked incorrect if there are spelling/ grammar mistakes or if they have copied words from the question in sentence completions.
- Remind them about spelling, etc., several times during the test.

### After completion of the test

- Ask students to work with a partner and check each other's answers. They should look for obvious errors such as spelling / grammar / number of words / order of answers / etc.
- Go round the class and guide them as they do this.
- Point out the 'cost' of spelling mistakes – the difference between the correct spelling of one word might reduce their overall grade from a band 7 to 6.5! Remind them of this constantly as it will encourage them to take the completion of their answer sheet more seriously.

### Checking the answers

After the students have checked for obvious errors, you can ask them to discuss the answers. This can be tackled section by section, passage by passage, in pairs or groups. You can then discuss it as a class.

Discussion of the entire test can take about an hour – if you are allowing students time to discuss freely. Do not stifle discussion, no matter how heated it becomes, especially if it is in English. Where possible try to get students to explain the correct answer. Or even get a student who got an answer wrong to explain the correct answer to the class. The more students are able to *talk* through a problem question, the easier it will be for them to *think* through similar problem questions in the long term.

Discussion helps students to slow their thoughts down, enabling them to sort through and remove confusing ideas. The more students do this, and with guidance, the clearer their reasoning will become.

Discussion also allows the whole class to think through their individual thoughts and to check the path their reasoning followed.

### Manipulating reading texts

Below are methods of manipulating the reading passages should you not want to use them as a test.

- Take Reading Passage 3. Hand out the passage without the questions and ask the students to read it in whatever way they want. Time them as they read. Tell them how much time they spent 'reading' it and compare that with what is expected in the exam.
- Using the same passage, ask the students to decide what type of questions they would ask. What information would they focus on if they were testing reading skills?
- Give the students a reading passage or a whole test, questions and answer key. Ask them to discuss in groups why a particular answer is correct. This will help them see the reasoning behind a question. You can check if their thought processes are correct or whether they have arrived at an answer purely by accident or erroneously. This activity sometimes surprises students and teachers. It also helps students to see patterns and develop thought processes.
- Give students a reading passage and ask them to prepare their own questions. Compare the students' questions with those in the test.

### Rules for reading

1. Do not read the whole passage in detail first.
2. If you have to read the passage, skim and underline organizational or theme words. Maximum time for skimming: two minutes.
3. Look at the title of the reading passage if there is one.
4. Read, the instructions and questions carefully.
5. Check that you know exactly what is required in each set of instructions.
6. Remember that the questions give you a summary of the content within a passage.
7. Read one set of questions and then locate and answer those questions.
8. Leave a question if you cannot do it.
9. Avoid underlining words you do not know. Ignore them.
10. Locate and underline the words or phrases which help with organization.
11. Fill in the answer sheet carefully.
12. Check spelling and grammar.
13. Do not repeat words from the questions when undertaking sentence completion exercises.
14. Always use a pencil to mark a text rather than a highlighter.

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## Marking an Academic Reading Test for IELTS

Some reading tests are easier than others. Therefore, the number of correct answers required to achieve a particular band differs in each exam.

Generally speaking, to achieve a grade of band 7 under exam conditions, candidates should aim to have 28-31 correct answers.

In this particular reading test candidates would require approximately 28 correct answers under exam conditions to achieve a grade of band 7.