

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE READING SKILLS FOR IELTS

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Abstract. *The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a globally recognized exam that assesses English proficiency for academic, professional and immigration purposes. Structurally, the IELTS exam comprises four sections—Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking—each targeting distinct language competencies. It is administered in two formats: the Academic module, tailored for higher education and professional certification, and the General Training module, which assesses practical language skills for workplace and social contexts. This article explores key strategies to enhance reading skills for the IELTS exam, focusing on comprehension techniques, vocabulary expansion and time management.*

Key words: *Reading skills, reading section, time-management, structure, practical skills, vocabulary enhancement.*

Introduction

Reading proficiency is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition and is particularly crucial for individuals preparing for standardized tests such as IELTS. The IELTS Reading section is designed to assess a candidate's ability to comprehend and analyze complex texts within a limited timeframe. It consists of 40 questions based on three passages, with a time limit of 60 minutes. Given the complexity and diversity of the texts, test-takers must employ effective strategies to enhance their reading proficiency. This article explores various techniques that can enhance reading skills, including skimming and scanning, vocabulary expansion, critical thinking, and time management.

Firstly, we should understand why most of test-takers struggle with the IELTS Reading section nowadays. Reading requires such skills as concentration, understanding of context, strong analytical and critical thinking skills, high reading speed and rich vocabulary. But, the rise of social media has provided us with easy access to various forms of entertainment and information that offers quick and visually stimulating content that requires less effort to consume. As a result, many people find it challenging to sit down and engage with a book. The constant bombardment of distractions from various instruments has made it difficult to concentrate on reading for extended periods. Our minds have become conditioned to frequent interruptions, making it harder to immerse ourselves in a book and truly absorb and appreciate its contents. Furthermore, the busy nature of our lives leaves little time for activities like reading. We are all too caught up with hectic schedules, juggling work, family responsibilities, and other commitments that finding a quiet moment to sit down with a book can seem like a luxury that seems too expensive to afford. So, the main reason why many people faced

with difficulties during reading section is that in modern life ,our brain is not set up for long-term reading and quick acceptance of the material as a result of the rapid development of technology and changing standards and priorities in people's live.

Now, we can move to strategies. **Time-management strategies:** Time management is crucial for success in the IELTS Reading section. Candidates should allocate approximately 20 minutes per passage, ensuring enough time to answer all questions. A suggested approach includes:

- **Previewing Questions First:** Quickly reviewing the questions before reading the passage helps identify **key information** and focus on **relevant details**.
- **Prioritizing Easier Questions:** Answering straightforward questions first can help maximize score potential before tackling more challenging ones.
- **Using a Stopwatch:** Practicing with a stopwatch can develop a sense of timing and improve pacing during the actual test.
- **Structured Approach:** Answer factual questions first before moving to inference-based or summary completion questions to optimize efficiency.
- **Skipping and Returning:** If a question seems too difficult, moving on and returning to it later prevents excessive time loss on a single item.
- **Familiarity with Question Types:** Understanding different question formats and their requirements helps save time by employing appropriate strategies for each.
- There is also a tendency among the three sections that one of them is as difficult as possible , the other is medium in complexity and the third is easy .And by using a timer, you can understand how much time you can save on a light text and spend it on a more complex one, and it's not necessary to allocate exactly 20 minutes for each section

Practicing More and Learning Question Types Regular and targeted practice is essential for improving IELTS Reading performance. Candidates should engage in diverse reading activities and familiarize themselves with question types to enhance accuracy and efficiency.

- **Engage in Daily Reading:** Reading at least 2-3 articles daily from newspapers such as The Guardian or The New York Times helps improve comprehension and adaptability to different text styles.
- **Take Timed Practice Tests:** Regularly attempting full-length reading tests under timed conditions (e.g., 60-minute sessions for 40 questions) builds stamina and improves time management skills.
- **Review Mistakes Thoroughly:** Analyzing incorrect answers to understand error patterns helps in avoiding similar mistakes in future tests. For example, if a candidate frequently struggles with True/False/Not Given questions, they should practice identifying key details and distinguishing between fact and inference.
- **Learn the Question Types:** IELTS Reading includes various question formats such as:
 1. **Multiple-choice (MCQ):** Requires choosing the best answer from four options (e.g., “Which statement best summarizes paragraph 3?”)
 2. **True/False/Not Given:** Demands careful reading to determine if information is explicitly stated, contradicted, or not mentioned.
 3. **Matching Headings:** Tests the ability to identify main ideas in paragraphs (e.g., choosing from 7 headings for 5 paragraphs).
 4. **Sentence Completion:** Requires filling in blanks using words from the passage (e.g., “The research conducted in 2022 concluded that ____.”)

- Use Practice Materials from Official Sources: Utilizing IELTS Cambridge practice books (e.g., Cambridge IELTS 15-18) ensures familiarity with real exam formats and question styles.
- Develop Skimming and Scanning Techniques: Practicing these reading strategies regularly helps in quickly locating information. For instance, skimming an article in 3 minutes for the main idea and scanning a table for specific figures can improve efficiency.

Vocabulary- building strategies A strong vocabulary is crucial for success in the IELTS Reading section. Expanding vocabulary helps with comprehension and accuracy. Effective methods include:

- **Read Widely:** Exposure to various text types such as academic articles, news reports, and research papers increases familiarity with new words.
- **Use a Vocabulary Journal:** Keep a record of new words, their **meanings, synonyms, antonyms**, and example sentences.
- **Learn Word Families:** Understanding related words (e.g., analyze, analysis, analytical) helps expand knowledge efficiently.
- **Practice Contextual Learning:** Instead of memorizing words in isolation, learn them in sentences to understand their usage.
- **Use Flashcards and Apps:** Apps like Anki, Quizlet, and Memrise can help with spaced repetition learning.
- **Engage in Active Use:** Incorporate new words into speaking and writing practice to reinforce retention.
- **Learn Common IELTS Vocabulary:** Focus on high-frequency words related to IELTS topics such as environment, technology, and education.
- **Practice Synonym Recognition:** Many IELTS Reading questions require identifying synonyms, so practicing paraphrasing can be beneficial.

Conclusion: Success in the IELTS Reading section depends on effective time management, consistent practice, and vocabulary enhancement. Managing time wisely allows candidates to complete all questions, while regular practice builds familiarity with different question types. Expanding vocabulary improves comprehension and accuracy. By integrating these strategies, test-takers can boost their confidence and achieve higher scores.

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