

IELTS READING: STRATEGIES TO BOOST THE SCORE

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to analyze the main methods and techniques for improving the quality of reading in English, as well as to develop recommendations for preparing for the IELTS exam in the "Reading" module. IELTS is a test for those who intend to study or practice in an English-speaking environment, it makes it possible to establish the degree of English proficiency in people who are not native speakers.

Keywords: IELTS, reading, reading skills, recommendations, strategies, techniques.

The second numbered IELTS module – "Reading" consists of 3 sections and 40 questions. The duration of testing is no more than 60 minutes. The subject is required to read the text and answer 40 questions that contain certain clarifications regarding the read text. Academic and General formats contain different texts in this module. The Academic format (Academic Reading) contains three parts. The total volume of texts in this format is 2000-2750 words. According to the test developers, texts for the academic format are taken from newspapers, books and magazines and correspond to the general cultural training of the subjects, that is, they do not contain narrowly specific professional information. Next, we will analyze possible techniques and exercises that can facilitate the process of preparing for the IELTS testing in the Reading module. In the process of preparing for the IELTS exam in the Reading module, a prerequisite is the development of reading skills, taking into account the importance of:

- a) a complete understanding of the content of simple texts;
- b) training the skills of understanding the main content of texts of various genres that are complex in content and structure: popular scientific, socio-political and artistic.

Let's consider two basic methodologies for developing reading skills:

Introductory (search) reading with an understanding of the main content of the text (Scanning reading and Skimming reading).

Skimming reading refers to reading to determine the main idea, topic, problem or purpose of the text. The task of Scanning reading is to find specific information, for

example, to determine where an event occurs, to find names, dates, to find synonyms. Consequently, in the process of introductory reading, such goals are pursued as:

- definition of the topic covered in the text, definition of the problems considered in the text, as well as definition of specific information about this problem;
- highlighting the main idea;
- selection of the main facts, omitting the secondary ones; – identification of the author's position.

Students must understand the content of the text and comprehend the information received. Students should be guided by the fact that, as a rule, the main semantic load in the text is carried by the first paragraph (introduction), as well as the initial and final sentences of each paragraph.

Working with the text in the introductory reading mode involves a cursory reading for 3-4 minutes to obtain basic information. I suggest the following exercises to work in this mode:

- What theme / field of science is dealt with in this text?
- Which of these titles fits the text best? (Several headings are suggested).
- Which of these topics are dealt with in the text? (Several topics are suggested).
- Which paragraph / text belongs to this picture? (One picture and several short texts are offered).
- Which of these texts deals with the problem of environment protection? etc. (Several short texts are offered).

Before working on a new text, the teacher should direct the students' attention to reading and understanding the text. He/she names the problem/field of science considered in the text. You can ask students what they know about this problem and how they feel about it. At the preparatory stage of working with the text, it is necessary to perform pre-text exercises in order to remove some linguistic and semantic difficulties of the text. A few examples of such exercises:

- practice pronunciation of geographical names, names, as well as some words. Here you can add words in the pronunciation of which students traditionally make mistakes, for example: infinite, inventory, consequences, purchasing, etc.
- work with individual words related to a potential dictionary: international, derivatives, complex. Students should guess the meaning of these words, give their own translation options.
- development of complex grammatical structures through their analysis, translation.
- familiarization with text questions /tasks to which students must find an answer by reading the text, which involves identifying keywords in the task or question and then finding their periphrases in the text.
- work with synonyms, antonyms, definition of words by their definitions.

One of the important types of work at the pre-text stage is the prediction of both the content of the text and the forms of words. The following tasks are aimed at predicting the content:

- definition of the main topic/thought of the text by title and subtitle (if any);
- definition of the main idea of the text and the author's attitude to the problem raised by the first and last paragraphs of the text;
- selection of the main topic of the text from a number of suggested topics after reading the title of the text.

Examples of typical exercises for predicting the forms of a readable word:

- making a word from individual letters: *slsga* (expected answer - glass);
- reading a word with missing letters: *cr _ _ te* (expected answer - create)
- composing a word from separate parts (on cards): base + prefix or suffix – use (-less; un-; -ful; -er; -ness; -able) (expected answers - useless, unusable, useful, reuse, user, usefulness, usable);
- reading a sentence by filling in the blanks (or instead of drawings) with the appropriate words.

Such exercises are very important for training the performance of such types of exam tasks as filling in gaps in tables, diagrams, short retellings, as well as tasks for completing sentences.

Reading the text in order to understand the main content is regulated depending on the volume and complexity of the text. The control of reading comprehension is carried out by performing post-text exercises:

- selection of headings for paragraphs of the text;
- answers to questions about the basic information of the text in the form of short answers, in the form of choosing the correct answer from several suggested answers;
- determination of the reliability of the proposed statement of the information provided in the text;
- finding specific information.

At this stage, the ability to navigate in the text, to find units of semantic information is tested, for example, to quickly find and read a sentence in which the main characters are named (place of action, time, character characteristics, causes and consequences of actions, etc.).

The rapid finding of the necessary information in the text is facilitated, for example, not by reading, but by searching, for which the reverse viewing technique is used, when the text is viewed not as in traditional reading from left to right and from top to bottom, but from bottom to top and from right to left. This avoids involuntary reading of words and helps to isolate the necessary information.

As a rule, all textbooks on preparing for the IELTS exam offer recommendations on how to perform a particular task on the exam. The teacher should make a bank of such

recommendations for each task. Such information, brought to the students, will help them to create their own algorithm for performing each type of tasks.

At the same time, it is important to encourage students to increase their reading speed with the help of exercises such as:

- reading a text / passage of text for a certain period of time. For this type of exercises, it is necessary to select texts or passages of the same length and difficulty and gradually reduce the reading time;
- reading sentences with gradually increasing elements for the same period of time;
- reading the text and quickly finding the answer to the teacher's question;
- restoration of "blurred" text.

Reading with full comprehension of the text (intensive reading). It should be noted that this type of reading is not used on the IELTS exam, but work on this type of reading is necessary at the preparation stage, since this type of reading serves as the basis for replenishing the active and passive vocabulary of readers, as well as mastering grammatical structures, ways of transmitting information in the text. This type of reading requires a lot of time and effort on the part of students to master it in full. Before reading the text, it is necessary to set various tasks for students in order to gradually acquaint them with the specifics of intensive reading and develop the skills and abilities necessary for them to successfully pass the IELTS exam: highlighting the main idea; summarizing what they read; finding answers to the questions posed; reading a diagram or an image of what they read schematically or in the form of a drawing. Post-text exercises at this stage serve mainly to test the understanding of both the read text as a whole and its individual sections. Their goal is to assess the level of understanding of the content and key information of the read text. Such exercises are creative in nature and are aimed not so much at the development of memory as thinking, mental abilities, logic. These exercises may contain tasks that, for example, determine the logical-compositional relationships in the text, cause-and-effect relationships between the phenomena described in the text: drawing up a text plan; dividing the text into logical parts and defining them; drawing up questions to the text and arranging them in a logical sequence. Exercises that contribute to the development of the ability to express one's own judgment and one's attitude and assessment of what has been read may have, for example, tasks such as: express your opinion on a particular thought, phenomenon, statement in the text; prepare a message on the subject of the text using additional information, etc.

In this article, I tried to review the main types of exercises and tasks in English, the purpose of which is to develop reading skills. I planned to analyze the features of preparing for the IELTS exam in the Reading module, and the proposed set of exercises will help improve not only reading skills, but also speaking skills in preparation for such exam modules as Speaking and Writing. Many issues of the

development of reading skills are still waiting to be developed, both theoretically and practically.

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