READING STRATEGIES & TEST TIPS

**Unless you are an advanced learner, you will probably not have time to read the 3 passages**. In order to find the answers to the questions, it is necessary to practise the skills of ***skimming and scanning***. These terms describe the action of looking quickly around the texts for markers that will help you find the right answers quickly. You will find some help with skimming and scanning strategies listed below.

SKIMMING AND SCANNING TIPS

* Look at the title and any headlines and/or pictures that you find.
* Read the first set of questions. You will only be asked to find the answers to these questions – you do not have to try and understand the whole text.
* Read the instructions carefully and underline any key words.
* Read question 1. Underline the key words: Michael Faraday/the first person
* Look at the first paragraph. You should look at the centre of the paragraph as though you are looking at a photo – not a text. Do not try to read from left to right.
* To stop you from reading the paragraph, cover the left and right sides of the paragraph with your fingers or pieces of paper. Focus your eyes on the centre.
* Can you see the key words? Can you find the name Michael Faraday? No? Then move on to the next paragraph and repeat this process.
* When you find the name Michael Faraday, read the paragraph carefully.

MORE SCANNING TIPS

For those students whose first language uses the Latin alphabet, this may be relatively easy to do as they can find the CAPITAL LETTERS quite quickly. However, for other students, this can prove challenging. Here are some tips that may help you:

* If you find it difficult to find Capital Letters (at the beginning of some words) or dates in a text, try turning the page upside down. Does it help you to find them?
* Another scanning tip is this: Take a clean piece of paper and place it under the first line in the first paragraph of a text. Focus your eyes in the middle of the first line then, keeping your vision fixed in the centre (without looking from left to right) draw the paper down the paragraph fairly quickly. This strategy should help you practise scanning the paragraph rather than trying to read it quickly.

QUESTIONS – TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN

*What is the difference?*

* When the answer is the same as the *meaning* in the text (although synonyms may be used), then the answer is *TRUE*.
* When the answer is *False*, it is because the information in the text contradicts, that is, it is the opposite of the question statement.
* When the correct answer is *Not Given*, it is because there is nothing in the text that means the same as the question statement.

With practise, students soon improve their reading scores and their understanding of the question type True/False/Not Given or Yes/No/Not Given. As the IELTS examiners know that this question type is challenging for most students, they provide the following help to make it easier for you to find the correct answer:

* In True/False/Not Given and Yes/No/Not Given questions, there are usually several names of people that use capital letters. It is much easier to find CAPITAL LETTERS in a text than lower case ones. For example: *Michael Faraday*.
* There may be names of countries, continents, or nationalities in the question statement and in the texts, such as *South America* in Passage 1 and *Americans* and *Australians* in Passage 2.
* Similarly, there may be abbreviations or acronyms, such as *SETI* and *NASA* in Passage 2.
* There may also be dates, ages and/or numbers in the texts. Although there were no questions about dates etc. in Reading Test 1, there could be in future Readings that you will see. (e.g. Passage 2)

**You will have more help with this question type later in the course.**

HOW TO APPROACH PASSAGE 3

The third reading passage in an IELTS exam is usually more difficult than Passages 1 and 2. You are advised to spend 17 minutes on Passage 1, 20 minutes on Passage 2, and 23 minutes on Passage 3.

There are several reasons why Passage 3 may be more difficult. The major differences are:-

1. The paragraphs are not marked with letters; A, B, C, D etc., which may make it more difficult to find the answers.
2. The vocabulary is specific to the subject of tortoises and other land and sea creatures; *gills*, *amphibious*, *fossils*, *habitat*, and their evolution.
3. There are 14 questions, with 3 different question types, including the challenging True/False/Not Given.
4. There are Greek terms included, which some students find intimidating, e.g. *ichthyosaurs*, *P. quenstedti*and *P. talampayensis.*
5. There is a flow-chart to fill in. Students may not have had practise doing this task before.

PASSAGE 3 – FLOW-CHARTS

TEST TIPS

Intermediate level students often report that they spend too long on Passages 1 and 2, and then do not have time to complete Passage 3. In this case, however, there is a Flow-Chart to complete, and these tend to be relatively easy. If you find that you are running out of time, you will find it easier to complete a flow-chart (or label a diagram) than to answer the other question types.

* **It is advisable, therefore, to attempt to fill in a flow-chart and/or label a diagram first.**

When completing a flow-chart, the major challenges are:

* Flow-charts deal with a sequence of events or a process that you may know nothing about.
* You may come across vocabulary that could be unfamiliar or technical.

However, the questions on a flow-chart will only come in one section of a text, making it quite easy to find the answers:

* When you find the part of the text that refers to the flow-charts, it is relatively easy to find the missing key words.
* The missing information will come in a logical order.

For example - Question 34:

The first words on the flow-chart are: *71 species of living turtles and tortoises . . .*

Looking at Passage 3, on the second page (p26), the above key words can be seen very clearly at the top. This is where the answers will be found. However, it is important to always read one or two lines before any marker that you find. In this case, the beginning of the paragraph is on the previous page (p25), where paragraph four begins. The answer to Q34 is there.

The rest of the answers come very quickly after question 34 – all contained in the same paragraph.

You will gain confidence in completing flow-charts with further practise. While you are not expected to know the technical and/or scientific vocabulary, you should trust your judgement when following the logical order that the unknown terms will come in.

**You will be given specific instruction through a video on the completion of flow-charts on your course.**

TRUE / FALSE / NOT GIVEN

Questions 31-33

**You will be given instruction and practise on this question type during the class sessions.**

VERY IMPORTANT TEST TIPS

Naturally, it is advisable to attempt all the questions in Passage 3. Unfortunately, some students have reported that they simply did not have time to finish the last reading passage and they lost valuable marks.

However, many students have admitted to using the following strategy: If they found that they really did not have enough time to attempt the True / False / Not Given questions, **they took the risk of answering all the questions with *True***. In this case, as there are only 3 questions, one of them would have been correct.

This strategy may not always work, but the possibilities of getting at least ONE answer correct is very high.

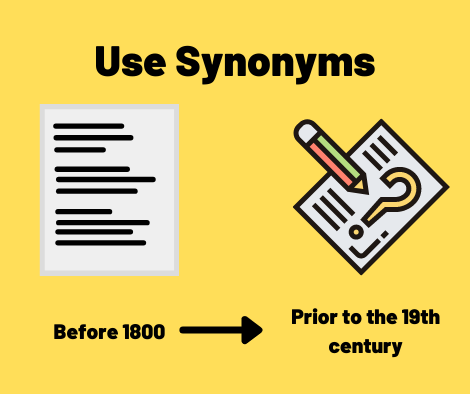
**VERY IMPORTANT: Naturally, you should try and answer ALL the questions in your reading test. The above strategy should ONLY be used if you are really running out of time!**

Having saved quite a lot of time by using the strategy described above, there would be more time to attempt questions 27-30, which you cannot guess.

**Question 40:** It is advisable never to leave any question unanswered. Once again, if you **really do not have time** to complete Passage 3, you could guess the answer to this last question!

**More important tips**

## **LEARN TO USE SYNONYMS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE**



In IELTS reading, synonyms are of the utmost importance. Anyone who has done a few practice tests (or a real one!) will know this. Let’s look at an example:

**Question: Which section contains the following information? An example of a domestic product made of high-quality gum.**

**Text: The first major commercial use of kauri gum was in the manufacture of high-grade furniture varnish, a kind of clear paint used to treat wood. The **best and purest gum** that was exported prior to 1910 was used in this way. Kauri gum was used in 70% of the oil varnishes being manufactured in England in the 1890s.**

This is actually quite a difficult question because there is nothing that is really a synonym of “domestic” here and in fact “commercial” almost acts to deter the reader from choosing this section. The key, though, is the phrase “the best and purest gum,” which is the only phrase in the whole article that is a synonym of “high-quality gum.” Beyond that, we have the reference to furniture varnish, which is certainly a domestic product.

As such, by locating synonyms and examples, we can find the correct passage in a long article.