**Reading test advice**

**Follow this Reading test advice, and make sure you understand how to respond to ‘completion’ type questions.**

It is essential that you write your answers on the [answer sheet](http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/prepare-test/understand-test-format/reading-test/example-answer-sheet). Nothing you write on the question paper will be marked.

You may write your answers on the question paper and transfer them to the answer sheet before the end of the test if you like. However, it is important to note that you will not be given extra time to do this.

You must write your answers in pencil.

Make the most of your Reading test:

* Look out for the title, headings and any special features such as capital letters, underlining, italics, figures, graphs and tables
* Make sure that you understand the questions and follow instructions carefully
* Pay attention to timing; do not spend too long on one passage or question
* Do not try and read every word; remember, you are reading for a purpose
* If you do not know the answer to a question, attempt it but do not waste time; move quickly onto the next one
* Do not panic if you do not know anything about the subject of the text; all the answers can be found in the text
* The word(s) you use must be taken from the Reading text; you must not change the form of the word(s) in the text
* Do not worry if there is a word that you do not understand – you may not need to use it
* Check your spelling
* Be careful to use singular and plural correctly
* Focus precisely on what you are asked to do in ‘completion’ type questions
* If the question asks you to complete the note ‘in the…’ and the correct answer is ‘evening’, just use ‘evening’ as your answer; note that ‘in the evening’ would be incorrect
* Pay attention to the word limit; for example, if you are asked to complete a sentence using no more than two words, if the correct answer is ‘silk shirt’, the answer ‘shirt made of silk’ would be incorrect
* Attempt all questions; there are no penalties for incorrect answers, so you have nothing to lose
* Check your answers

### Beat the fear – read as much as possible

Read as much as possible. This does not mean doing endless IELTS practice tests but do as much general reading as possible. Read short articles on topics that interest you or on topics that are common in IELTS – newspapers and magazines are a great resource here.

If, however, you read enough “native English” before the exam, you will become more confident in looking at texts where you don’t understand every word.

### Improve key skills – [skimming](http://www.dcielts.com/?p=381) and scanning and reading in detail

A major problem in the exam is the length of the texts and you will not have time to read them all carefully. Two skills here are **skimming** which is reading quickly for general meaning and **scanning** which is looking for specific information.

You shouldn’t read the whole text in detail but you will need to parts of the text in detail – if you want to get the right answer. Skimming and scanning are useful skills to help show you where the answer might be: reading in detail tells you what the answer is.

### [Time management – experiment to see what works](http://www.dcielts.com/?p=410)

Because the texts are so long you need to have a definite strategy for how you manage your time in the exam to make sure you finish on time. This means deciding:

* how long you look at the text before answering questions
* how long you spend on each question
* how long you spend on each group of questions
* how long you spend on each text
* do you leave time at the end to go back at look at unanswered questions?

The key point here is that different learners have different styles and different needs. Much the best advice here is to experiment and try different approaches and see what works best for you.

### Focus on the question – avoid careless errors

The texts in IELTS are typically quite hard, so candidates spend as much time as possible reading the texts. This is a mistake. Why? Well, a huge amount of mistakes are made by not focussing enough on the exact question. It can be easy if you are in a hurry to miss a word such as “always” or “often”: the problem is these words can change the meaning of questions.

Therefore, it is wise to go back and look at the question before you write the answer.

### Learn the exam – know the different types of questions

There are 8/9 different types of reading question that examiners may use. Before the exam, you should make yourself familiar with each type of question, as they are slightly different.

### Train yourself, don’t test yourself

One common mistake candidates make is to practise exam questions too much. Exam practice is important to learn the timing and learn the question types , but that does not mean that every time you practise reading you need to do it in exam conditions. You should do some “open book” tests where you can see the answers as you do the questions. This way you will learn how examiners set questions and how to find the answers. If you just test yourself, this may not happen.

### Learn how to underline

There are at least two reasons for this:

1. If you underline key words in the text, it can help you organise the text and this will save you time in the exam
2. If you find an answer, it is sensible to underline the part of the passage that relates to the question as a check and to write the number of the question next to it in case you find a better answer later.

How you do this will depend on you and your style. Some people underline different types of words in different ways.Remember: if you underline too much, it can become confusing.

### Beware word matching – be careful with key words

One very common mistake is to [match a word](http://www.dcielts.com/ielts-reading/how-to-use-key-words/) in the question with a word in the text and to think you have found your answer. It is almost never that simple and if the words do match, then that is not your answer. What you are normally looking for are either synonyms (words with a similar meaning) or paraphrases (short bits of text that say the same as the question).

### The questions follow the text – normally

Typically, the questions will come in the order of the text: so the answer to question 3 will come after the answer to question 2. This can be very helpful in the exam if you are a quick worker who goes through the questions once for the easy ones and then a second time for the harder ones. If you have answer 4 underlined and answer 6 underlined then you know where answer 5 must come.

Note: In certain types of question (e.g. paragraph matching) the order of the questions are jumbled.

### The questions or the text – which do you read first

There is no one right answer here.

Textbooks tend to advise you to read the text quickly first so that you know how the text is organised. This helps you to save time later by knowing which paragraph will contain the answer. This can be a good approach, particularly for a high level candidate provided you don’t spend too much reading and you have notes/underlines.

Many teachers say that you should read the questions first and not read the whole passage. There is logic here too. Normally, you do not have to understand the meaning of the whole passage to answer the questions, so why waste time reading it? This approach can work, especially for lower level candidates who might not understand too much of the passage anyway.

In paragraph matching you are going to have to read the whole passage, so you might decide to read first then. In the short answer questions, you might decide to look at the questions first.

### Fill out the answer sheet

Practise filling out the answer sheet before you get to the exam. Whenever you practise IELTS, use an answer sheet. Two points:

1. When you go through the answers in your practice book, make sure that you have written the answer exactly as it is in the book – anything else will lose you the point
2. You need to fill out your answers in the 60 minutes. They don’t give you any more time.

**Tips 1:** Make the habit of reading faster by reading words in groups rather than a word by word. Try to read minimum 2 hours per day. Read whatever interest you but obviously written in English. The three reading passages are on topics of general interest and usually these passages are taken from books, newspapers, journals or magazines. So try to read recent news, Newspapers, Magazines, travel brochures etc. whenever possible.

**Tips 2:** Remember that you are reading for a purpose not for pleasure. While practicing make a habit of looking at the title and headings as well as ant special print like:  CAPITAL, **Bold,***italics****,*** "quotation", underlinedwords.

**Tips 3:** There are generally 10 types of questions available in the reading section. The types are:

1. Multiple Choices  
2. Short-answer questions  
3. Sentence Completion  
4.Notes/table/summary/flow-chart/diagram completion  
5. Yes, no, not given or True, false, not given  
6. Classification  
7. Matching lists/phrases  
8. Choosing headings for paragraphs/sections of a text  
9. Scanning and identifying location of information  
10.Labeling a diagram