Focus

10 steps to being a better reader

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Pre- Intermediate to Advanced</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>10 suggested steps to being a better reader</td>
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<td>Activity Type</td>
<td>Reading skills</td>
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<td>Focus</td>
<td>Reading skills and the reader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Language</td>
<td>Touring / Skimming, Scanning,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation/materials required</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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10 steps to being a better reader

Step 1 – Are you sitting comfortably?

- How we read is almost as important as what we read.
- Keep your shoulders level and relaxed and align them with your ears and hips.
- Take breaks. It is uncomfortable to maintain the same posture for a long period of time.
- If you are reading from a computer, make sure your screen is clean, with no glare from the window. If using a lamp, adjust it so it does not shine directly on the screen but merely highlights it. Adjust the colours on the screen. The best way to view text is to use dark letters on a light background.

Step 2 – Tour the text (Skimming)

- Tour the text quickly, noticing how the text is structured.
- Look at headings/subheadings, tables/graphs, images and key words to gain an overall impression and understanding of the topic.
- If there are no tables/graphs, images or headings, glance at the first and last sentence of each paragraph, and the introduction and conclusion.

Step 3 - Question yourself

- Ask yourself questions about the text to identify the topic. Begin by asking yourself “Who or what is this about?”
- Once you know the topic, the next question you should ask yourself is, “What does the author want me to know about this topic?”

Step 4 - Read with a purpose (Scanning)

- Having a purpose for reading often helps the reader to focus on the task in mind.
- Avoid making notes at this stage.
Step 5 – Infer meaning

- Try not to agonise over difficult words or ideas.
- Not all unknown words need to be recognised as this will slow down the speed of reading.
- When finding an unfamiliar word, check to see if a definition has been given.
- If no definition is given, use the context of the sentence(s) before and after to try and guess the meaning of the word.
- A dictionary can then be used to confirm the inferred meaning.

Step 6 – Use of a dictionary

- Using a concise dictionary when reading can assist vocabulary acquisition and retention.
- When looking up a word, it is beneficial to look up not only the meaning(s) but to note the part of speech (noun, verb…), context in which it is used, spelling, word forms, collocations and pronunciation to name a few. Repeating this process regularly will result in inferences becoming more accurate and using the word when writing will assist with retention of the word.

Step 7 – Testing your understanding of the text

- Once the text has been read, test your memory.
- Make notes of the points remembered, preferably without looking at the text.

Step 8 - Review

- Read the text again, whilst making brief notes.
- Compare the notes to identify the points remembered.
- Pay particular attention to the use of pronouns and restatement of ideas, this will also help to check your comprehension of the text.
- Use your own words (without the text) and write a summary.
- Reference the work to avoid plagiarism.

Step 9 – Analysing the text (reading for detail)

- Identifying the writer’s opinion and noting justifications for this opinion.
- Identifying ‘cautious’ words or use of ‘hedging’.
- Forming your own opinion and ability to justifying it.

Step 10 – Reflect

- Evaluation of the text - was the text enjoyable, why/why not?
- What have you learnt from the text? What did you already know?
- What has the text inspired you to read next and why?