

Teaching Reading and Writing

Reading skills

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Learning outcomes

This module focuses on teaching reading and equipping learners with the skills of reading. By the end of the module you will be able to:

- recognise a range of skills for effective reading
- identify activities that can be used to practise these specific skills
- explore other techniques for improving reading skills.

1 Before you watch

a. What skills do you need for effective reading?

Think about when you read in your own language and also in English?

Try to compare your answers with a partner.

b. Do you know what these reading skills are?

inferring skimming scanning

Match each one to the definitions taken from the British Council's TKT Glossary.

	is reading a text quickly to pick out specific information.
	is reading a text quickly to get a general idea of what it is about.
	is deciding how a writer feels about something from the way that they write rather than the words they use.

2 Watch

2.1 Reading skills advice

Watch and listen to the commentary at the beginning of **Reading skills: Part 1** (00:00 to 01:06). Then pause the video and answer the following questions.

a. What reading skills does the trainer mention?

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b. Finish the following sentences according to the trainer's advice.

"The reason that we read affects _____."

"We need to work with our students to _____."

"We also need to show them _____."

"We also need to ask comprehension questions and conduct activities that _____"

2.2 Reading skills practice

What does this advice mean in practice? Complete the following reading activity and afterwards we will analyse the reading skills that you used.

a. On the following page is a reading text about learning styles. Don't read it yet, instead make a note below about what you know about learning styles.

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b. Look quickly (25 seconds maximum) at the reading text on the next page. What is it about?

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c. Quickly look again at the reading text on the next page. Which three learning styles are mentioned?

1.
2.
3.

Learning styles

We all learn in different ways. One theory of learning focuses on the way information is given to learners and refers to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners.

- Visual learners respond well to pictures, colours, images. They need to see things to help them learn and remember.
- Auditory learners learn best by hearing things.
- Kinaesthetic learners like movement. They need movement and hands-on tasks to help them learn.

In any class we teach, the learners will have a range of learning styles. This means that to help all of our learners learn we have to use a range of classroom activities and techniques so that different styles of learner are interested and can learn from our lessons.

Adapted from: British Council (2008), Teaching Speaking

Read the text in more detail and answer the following questions. The first one has been done as an example.

d. Who is the text written for and how do you know that?

The text is written for teachers. It says **we teach, our class and our lesson** as well as using teaching jargon such as **activities and techniques**.

e. What do you think the expression 'hands-on' means? What helped you to guess?

f. In the final sentence what does 'this' refer to?

g. Is the theory outlined commonly accepted as the main theory of learning styles? Does the writer consider it the main theory? Please give reasons for your answer.

h. What is the main point that the writer wants to convey? How do you know that?

- i. This is the first part of a text on learning styles. What do you think second part will be about?

Try to compare your answers with a partner and then check them with the answer section at the end.

2.3 Reading skills analysis

1. We are now going to look at the questions again and think about their purpose. Each one practised one of the reading skills listed in the box below. Match each reading skill to each question. The first one has been done for you as an example.

scanning	inferring	predicting
recognising links	establishing context for reading	guessing meaning from context
identifying the target audience	skimming	identifying the main message

Question	Reading skill
a. On the following page is a reading text about learning styles. Don't read it yet, instead make a note about what you know about learning styles.	establishing context for reading
b. Look quickly (25 seconds maximum) at the reading text on the next page. What is it about?	
c. Quickly look again at the reading text on the next page. Which three learning styles are mentioned?	
d. Who is the text written for and how do you know that?	
e. What do you think the expression 'hands-on' means? What helped you to guess?	
f. In the final sentence what does 'this' refer to?	
g. Is the theory outlined commonly accepted as the main theory of learning styles? Does the writer consider it the main theory? Please give reasons for your answer.	
h. What is the main point that the writer wants to convey? How do you know that?	
i. This is the first part of a text on learning styles. What do you think second part will be about?	

2.4 Practising reading skills

a. Watch the next sequence of **Reading skills: Part 1** (01:22 to 08:24). You will see specific reading skills being practised. Put the activities below in the order you see them.

- _____ Scanning a text for specific details.
- _____ Guessing the meaning of words from the context.
- _____ Predicting the content of a text.
- _____ Skimming a text for the main ideas.
- _____ Identifying a text type and the purpose for reading.
- _____ Establishing the context for a reading text.

b. Watch and listen again. How does the teacher in sequence four (04:47 to 05:33) cater for different learning styles?

2.5 Teaching reading skills

a. Watch the final sequence of **Reading skills: Part 1** (08:39 to 10:57). The teachers talk about how they teach and provide practise for reading skills. Which of their tips have you seen in the video?

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b. What other tips and techniques do they mention?

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c. Which tips and techniques could you use with your classes? Put a tick (✓) in the right hand column of each table.

2.6 Reading skills – further practice

a. Watch **Reading skills: Part 2** (00:00 to 16:03).

What activities does the teacher use to practise each reading skill? Complete the table.

Reading skill	Activity
1. Establishing the context of the reading text. (00:24 to 02:30)	
2. Predicting the content. (02:31 to 04:30)	
3. Skimming for main ideas. (04:30 to 07:20)	
4. Scanning for specific details. (07:20 to 09:22)	
5. Guessing the meaning of vocabulary from the context (09:22 to 16:03)	

3 Reflection

Think about the next few classes that you are going to teach. If you use a coursebook, look at the next reading text.

- a. Analyse the reading tasks through the following questions:
1. Are there tasks for learners before, during and after reading?
 2. Are there a range of tasks that appeal to different learning styles?
 3. What reading skills do the tasks practise?
 4. How can you make these skills explicit to learners and help them identify how to improve their skills?

- b. How could you adapt and/or supplement the tasks to match your learners' needs? Are there any techniques from this module that you could use and try out?

Transcripts and answers

Transcripts of trainer's talk

2.1 Reading skills advice

The reason that we read affects how we read so for example if we are following instructions we will read differently than if we are reading to find out information.

There are a number of skills involved in reading for example predicting, skimming, scanning and recognising links. We need to work with our students to analyse what these skills are and also to show them how they can get better at these skills. We also need to ask comprehension questions and conduct activities that will practise these specific skills.

Now let's look at some examples of activities that practise a range of reading skills. Watch the films and make notes to answer the questions in the viewing task. The answers will appear at the end of the sequence.

2.5 Teaching reading skills

Let's listen now to some tips. Watch the interviews and make notes to answer the questions in the viewing task. The answers will appear at the end of the section.

In the next stage students read the text again, this time scanning for details. The teacher writes numbers on the board and asks students to find their significance in the text.

This activity encourages students to scan the text for specific information, allowing them to gain more in-depth understanding of the topic.

2.6 Reading skills – further practice

In this lesson you'll see how a range of reading skills is practised in one reading lesson. Watch the films and make notes to answer the questions in the viewing task. The answers will appear at the end of the sequence.

In this lesson, the students are going to look at a short article about social networking sites, Facebook and Twitter.

The teacher starts the lesson by showing students the Facebook logo and asking questions.

This generates interest and starts students thinking about the theme of the reading task to come.

First of all, students do a short punctuation task, using a sentence from the reading text.

Now the teacher uses the sentence to encourage students to predict the content of the text.

If students predict some of the content of a text before reading it, they can then read to check if their predictions are correct. This gives them a purpose for reading.

This kind of purpose is motivating for students because it has been generated by them; they have produced the predictions themselves.

Now the teacher asks students to read through the text quickly to check their predictions. She uses this task to encourage the students to skim the text – to read it quickly to get the main ideas. The skimming activity introduces students to the article and helps them gain a sense of what it is about, without putting them under pressure to read and understand the whole text in one go.

When students approach the text in stages, it makes the task more manageable and therefore more motivating.

In the next stage students read the text again, this time scanning for details. The teacher writes numbers on the board and asks students to find their significance in the text.

This activity encourages students to scan the text for specific information, allowing them to gain more in-depth understanding of the topic.

In the last stage, the students are encouraged to deduce meaning from context. The teacher gives the learners a worksheet with questions about the text content and the meaning of some vocabulary items. The students read the text again to answer the questions. No dictionaries are allowed! They must answer the questions and guess the meaning of the unfamiliar vocabulary from the other words and sentences that surround it.

An activity like this encourages students to be independent learners because it teaches them to look for clues in the text to deduce meaning, and not rely on dictionaries or the teacher!

Answers

1 Before you watch

b. Definitions

Scanning	is reading a text quickly to pick out specific information.
Skimming	is reading a text quickly to get a general idea of what it is about.
Inferring	is deciding how a writer feels about something from the way that they write rather than the words they use.

2.1 Reading skills practice

a. The trainer mentions the following skills:

- predicting
- skimming
- scanning
- recognising links

b. Trainer advice.

“The reason that we read affects *how we read*.”

“We need to work with our students to *analyse what these skills are*.”

“We also need to show them *how they can get better at these skills*.”

“We also need to ask comprehension questions and conduct activities that *will practise these specific skills*.”

2.2 Reading skills practice

b. Look quickly (25 seconds maximum) at the reading text on the next page. What is it about?

Learning styles

c. Quickly look again at the reading text on the next page. Which three learning styles are mentioned?

1. visual
2. auditory
3. kinaesthetic

d. Who is the text written for and how do you know that?

The text is written for teachers. It says we teach, our class and our lesson as well as using teaching jargon such as activities and techniques.

e. What do you think the expression ‘hands-on’ means? What helped you to guess?

Practical – from movement. You can guess from what the other two styles don’t cover and from the word hand.

f. In the final sentence what does 'this' refer to?

The previous sentence.

g. Is the theory outlined commonly accepted as the main theory of learning styles? Does the writer consider it the main theory? Please give reasons for your answer.

Yes as the writer does not mention any other theory and is able to apply this theory to teachers' practice.

h. What is the main point that the writer wants to convey? How do you know that?

To reach all our learners we have to use a range of learning styles. We know this because the last sentence summarises what has gone before and starts with *this means*. Another reason is that because the target audience are teachers, this is how the topic of learning styles relates to them.

i. This is the first part of a text on learning styles. What do you think second part will be about?

Different tasks and techniques that we can use to reach all our learners.

2.3 Reading skills analysis

1. Reading skills

Question	Reading skill
a. On the following page is a reading text about learning styles. Don't read it yet, instead make a note about what you know about learning styles.	establishing context for reading
b. Look quickly (25 seconds maximum) at the reading text on the next page. What is it about?	skimming
c. Quickly look again at the reading text on the next page. Which three learning styles are mentioned?	scanning
d. Who is the text written for and how do you know that?	identifying the target audience
e. What do you think the expression 'hands-on' means? What helped you to guess?	guessing meaning from context
f. In the final sentence what does 'this' refer to?	recognising links
g. Is the theory outlined commonly accepted as the main theory of learning styles? Does the writer consider it the main theory? Please give reasons for your answer.	inferring
h. What is the main point that the writer wants to convey? How do you know that?	identifying the main message
i. This is the first part of a text on learning styles. What do you think second part will be about?	predicting

2. Giving reasons to support answers.

Giving a reason as part of each answer offers additional information about how reading skills are applied. As teachers you can use this technique to help understand how your learners reach their answers and therefore ascertain their needs

2.4 Practising reading skills

a. Reading skills practice.

2. Scanning a text for specific details.
5. Guessing the meaning of words from the context.
1. Predicting the content of a text.
6. Skimming a text for the main ideas.
3. Identifying a text type and the purpose for reading.
4. Establishing the context for a reading text.

b. Catering for different learning styles.

The teacher caters for visual learners by showing the class pictures. The use of a mnemonic may also help learners who find it difficult to remember a lot of information.

2.5 Teaching reading skills

a. Teaching tips.

- Use visual aids to establish context and generate interest
- Teach learners to predict text content
- Teach learners to skim the text for the main ideas
- Teach learners to scan the text for specific details
- Teach learners to understand meaning from context

b. Other tips and techniques mentioned

- Pre-teach key vocabulary
- Help learners to understand that they don't need to know the meaning of every new word in the text
- Give learners explanations about reading skills terminology, for example prediction and skimming in their first language

2.6 Reading skills – further practice

Reading skill	Activity
1. Establishing the context of the reading text. (00:24 to 02:30)	The teacher uses visual images (social network logos) to establish the text context.
2. Predicting the content. (02:31 to 04:30)	Learners punctuate a sentence from the text, then use that sentence to predict the text content.
3. Skimming for main ideas. (04:30 to 07:20)	Learners skim the text to check if their predictions (from the previous stage) are correct.
4. Scanning for specific details. (07:20 to 09:22)	Learners scan the text to find the significance of specific numbers.
5. Guessing the meaning of vocabulary from the context (09:22 to 16:03)	Learners answer worksheet questions about the meaning of some text vocabulary. They cannot use dictionaries and must deduce the meaning from the words that surround the target vocabulary.

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