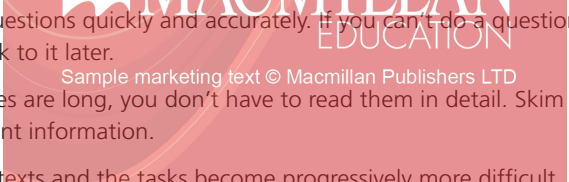


Reading

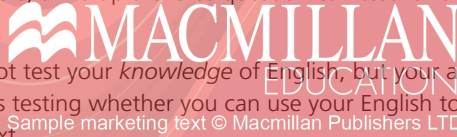
Exam summary

- The academic reading module takes 60 minutes.
- There are three reading texts with a total of 1500–2500 words.
 - The texts can be on a range of different topics.
 - At least one of the texts will contain a detailed logical argument.
 - The texts become progressively more difficult to understand.
- There are usually 40 questions. These questions become progressively more difficult.
- The reading component is weighted. The standard is the same on each test day. However, to reach a specific band, the number of correct answers required is different in each exam.

Golden rules

- 
- ◆ Answer the questions quickly and accurately. If you can't do a question quickly, leave it and come back to it later.
 - ◆ As the passages are long, you don't have to read them in detail. Skim and scan them to find the relevant information.
 - ◆ The level, the texts and the tasks become progressively more difficult. Therefore, do the earlier questions as quickly as possible, to give yourself more time for the difficult questions.
 - ◆ You have roughly one and a half minutes for each question.
 - ◆ Do not panic if you can only do maybe three questions out of seven. Go through them again and again, but quickly.
 - ◆ When you finish one passage, check your answers and try to fill any gaps.
 - ◆ The questions generally follow the order of the information in the text. However, the questions in one section can overlap another and they may be jumbled.
 - ◆ The questions are usually paraphrases of the text so look for the meaning in the text, not the exact words.

- ◆ The questions test general understanding [G] and specific detail [S]:
 - Matching headings [G]
 - Multiple-choice questions [G and S]
 - Summary/flow-chart/table completion [G and S]
 - Classification [G and S]
 - Matching sentences from a suitable list [G and S]
 - Answering *Yes, No, Not Given* [G and S]
 - Answering *True, False, Not Given* [G and S]
 - Matching stems to sentences endings [S]
 - Sentence completion [S]
 - Short answer questions [S]
- ◆ Some question types are used to see how you deal with specific information and general meaning. For example, a multiple-choice question can test for detail or understanding of a whole text.
- ◆ The questions do not test your *knowledge* of English, but your ability to *use* your English. The exam is testing whether you can use your English to find your way around a written English text.



Techniques to increase your speed

Learn to use the following techniques separately, to switch automatically and to use several at one time:

- *Skimming*. Skim the text to obtain general information. Think about the general information and not the detail. Don't underline.
- *Scanning*. Scan for specific detail only; don't concentrate on the meaning of the text. If you start to read, or even to skim, you will find it more difficult to locate your words.
- *Skim and read*. Skim a text, and stop at particular points to look at the meaning. Use the questions to guide you around the text.
- *Scan and skim*. When you scan a text for a specific word, your eye touches the other information lightly. Because your focus is on the scanning, your eye skims the text naturally and does not slow you down. You need to practice to build your confidence.

Skimming

Basic skimming techniques

- 1 Skim the title and the questions. They give you a summary of the passage.
- 2 Skim the content words only, i.e. the *nouns, main verbs, adjectives* and *adverbs*. Do not look at words like *the, a, in, is*, etc. Underline the content words in a few paragraphs. Then read them again.
- 3 Skim only the basic structure of the sentences/clauses: the *subject, verb*, and the *object* (if there is one). Don't look at adverbs and adjectives.
- 4 Without reading the text, mark the connecting words, e.g. *moreover, in addition, however, etc.* Practise until you can see the connecting words automatically when you look at a paragraph. Then you do not need to mark them.
- 5 Skim so that you recognize common types of paragraph organization, like *effects, causes, methods, etc.* See *Matching headings to paragraphs on page 12*.
- 6 Skim only the nouns in the text to give you a general picture. Be clear about the differences between: a noun, verb adjective and adverb. Learn to recognize them and know what their function is in the sentence.

Intermediate skimming techniques

- 7 Read the first sentence of a paragraph and then skim the beginning of each sentence in the paragraph. This will show you the general theme of the paragraph. ►► See *Text organization* below. For example:

His career was rather chequered, spanning a period of 30 years. He ... After resigning, he ... Not long after he ... Van Damme then ...

The referring word *he* carries the information through the subsequent sentences.

- 8 Ignore and do not underline words you do not know. Focusing on words you do not know will slow you down.
- 9 Skim the verbs in each sentence. This shows you if the content of the text is changing.
- 10 Start at the verb in each sentence and look at everything after that. The verb usually marks the beginning of new information in the sentence.
- 11 Cover the left hand or right hand side of a text and skim. This stops you concentrating too hard on the meaning.
- 12 Skim a text to understand a theme. This can be factual or ideas. For example, skim a text *line by line* without looking at the meaning and pick out words that form a pattern/ picture or that have something in common. As you skim, remember writers have to avoid repetition so they have to use synonyms to create a theme.

Advanced skimming techniques

- 13 Skim the text forwards or backwards and note words which form a general picture:
airports, passengers, lounge, fly.
- 14 Locate the focus of the paragraph. It is not always at the beginning. ►► See *Writing* page 35 for words like *problems, ideas* that help you.
- 15 Use your own knowledge of different types of sentences and paragraph organizations to predict and move around the passage. ►► See *Writing, How to organize a paragraph* page 35.
- 16 Look at a central point in a paragraph and then allow your eye to wander around the paragraph skimming the nouns, verbs for the general idea.
- 17 Use the questions to help you navigate text. ►► See *Writing, Analysing the essay questions and understanding the rubric* on page 33.

Seven skimming tricks

- 1 Use a pencil to help you skim. This helps train your eye.
- 2 Skim each sentence from left to right.
- 3 When you develop confidence, skim left to right and then right to left and so on.
- 4 Move a pencil vertically down through the centre of the text forcing your eye to look quickly at the text on either side.
- 5 Skim diagonally through the text – top left to bottom right. You could also go backwards diagonally or vertically.
- 6 Jump in different directions through the text. Then stop now and again and read.
- 7 Skim the ends of sentences. A sentence is basically divided between information which refers back to the previous sentence and information which is new. Information which refers generally comes at the beginning and new ideas at the end. Skim the end of the sentences. Example: *A man walked into a shop. The man picked up a newspaper. The newspaper ...*

At all times try not to get caught up in the detail.

Scanning

Choosing scanning words in the questions

- Choose your scanning words carefully. For example, with *True, False, Not Given*, read all the statements and look for words that occur frequently. These are likely to be the general subject of the passage, so they will not help you scan.
- Look for words that relate to the general subject. They can be nouns, names, dates, etc.
- Keep in mind the basic structure of a sentence: *Subject, Verb, Object*. Anything extra qualifies the sentence, e.g. additional clauses, adjectives, adverbs, negative words, comparisons. These words/phrases help you understand the focus of the statement. For example, you should notice a negative word like *ignore* immediately. It is probably not a scanning word, but a word that tests your understanding of the text.
- Look for words and ideas that help you navigate the text. *This is a very efficient tool*. Look at the questions together and not in isolation. The questions can often be subdivided: two relating to one area of text; three to another, etc. Connect the questions, group them and use this to help you to jump around the text.

How to scan slowly

- Scan from left to right, left to right. You must look only for your chosen scanning words. If you do not, this will be a slow and ineffective technique.

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Text Text Text Text Text Text



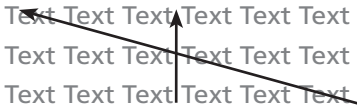
How to scan quickly

- To stop yourself from reading every word, start at the end of each line or paragraph. Scan from right to left, right to left backwards through the text. This prevents you from reading the text.

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← Text Text Text Text Text Text

Alternatively, scan diagonally through the text from bottom right to top left, or vertically, from the bottom to the top.



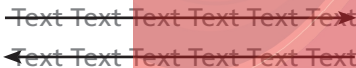
- Move through the text in a zigzag backwards. This stops you from reading. Move faster each time you practise.



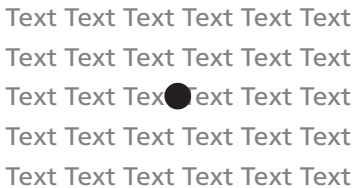
You can also scan forward, but you must stop yourself reading the text.



- When you have gained confidence, scan forwards left to right, right to left and so on. You do not have to waste time going to the beginning of a line each time!



- Very efficient readers can look at the centre of a paragraph and do not allow their eye to move. They then take everything in around the central point. If a paragraph is long, do it in stages.



You will pick up meaning as you scan. You are then becoming an efficient reader!



How to mark the text when you skim or scan

- Use a pencil so you can rub out mistakes.
- Only underline key words: scanning words from the questions and organizing words.
- Underline as little as possible. Too much underlining makes it difficult to find essential information. Remember more is less.

Compare:

The effects of lack of investment can be seen clearly in the state of the trains and the stations. The carriages are old-fashioned and generally in a bad state of repair, factors which put people off using public transport. People are often frightened to travel at night because there are no guards on the trains and the stations deserted...

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- Develop a simple underlining code. Use a box  for focus words like *measures*, etc. Underline main ideas. Use a zigzag line  for detail."/>
- If you are fast, use this code in the exam. If not, just underline. It helps you focus on the organization of the text.

Completing the answer sheet

- Fill in the answer sheet carefully. Use a pencil.
- Mark the end of the first two passages on the sheet with a short line. Aim to complete one stage at a time.
- Fill in the answers directly onto the sheet and in the correct order.
- Write clearly. Give only one answer unless the instructions require more.
- Write in the correct spaces and keep within them.
- Check your spelling, especially common words and follow the word limit.
- Do not copy words from the question stem or paraphrases from the text. The answer will be marked incorrect.
- Skim/check your answers when you finish. Choose answers at random to check, or check them backwards. Also check your answers against the questions to make sure the grammar is correct.

Matching headings to paragraphs

- Matching headings with paragraphs tests your ability to understand general information.
- Look always for the most general heading. This may be the first paragraph or the conclusion.
- Always do exercises with headings first, as the headings summarize the text. They help you scan the answers to the other questions.
- Look at any titles with the passage.
- Look at the example, if there is one. Don't just cross it out. It may be the introduction, which organizes the other headings.
- The example may be of the second or another paragraph. Still use the heading to predict the headings next to it.
- If there are only a few paragraph headings to match there will probably not be an example.
- Read the instructions. Check if you can use a heading more than once.
- Sometimes there are more paragraphs than headings, so you need to skim quickly.
- If the list of headings is long, reveal them one at a time to stop panicking.

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Technique 1: analyse the grammar and vocabulary in the headings

- Distinguish between the two types of words used: *information specific to the paragraph* and *organizing words*.
- Organizing words like plural countable words are common, e.g. *causes, reasons, advantages, drawbacks, difficulties, responses, problems, effects, solutions, factors, dangers, examples, etc.* Learn to recognize how these are expressed in a text. Be aware of similar words.

Note that the specific information about the paragraph is added on to these organizing words: [causes] *of poverty in urban areas*; [different levels] *of urban poverty*. Note how the phrases in italics narrow the meaning of the organizing words in brackets.

Use this division of information to help you skim/scan paragraphs. Look for paragraphs that describe *effect, levels, problems, etc.* Then see if they contain the specific information in the rest of the heading.

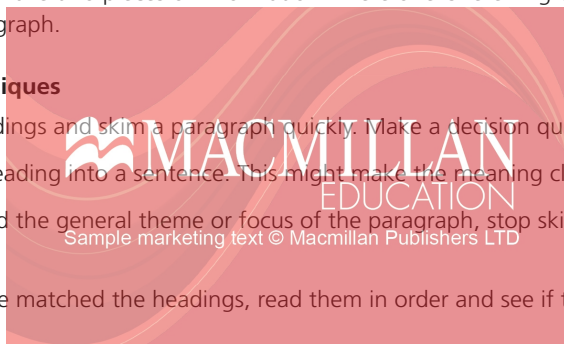
- Plural organizing words indicate the paragraph has more than one idea or a list of ideas probably with an introduction.
- A paragraph can be organized around uncountable words: *damage, etc.* It can be organized around countable singular nouns where the paragraph is describing one item: *a comparison, impact, development, etc.*

Technique 2: search for connections between headings

- Headings are usually connected with each other.
- Check for a heading that looks specific; it could be a detail in a paragraph and therefore a distracter for a general heading. If you removed this detail from the paragraph, would it still remain intact?
- A heading that looks specific could be a heading for paragraph describing just one detail.
- Check for headings that relate to each other: *cause/effect; problem/solution*.
- Check for headings with adjectives, which qualify nouns. Make sure the heading covers all aspects of the paragraph. Don't forget about the adjective or other qualifying phrases.
- Headings can have two pieces of information where one is referring back to the previous paragraph.

Advanced techniques

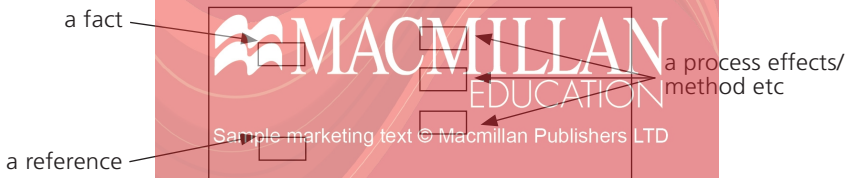
- Read the headings and skim a paragraph quickly. Make a decision quickly.
- Expand the heading into a sentence. This might make the meaning clearer.
- When you find the general theme or focus of the paragraph, stop skimming and match quickly.
- Once you have matched the headings, read them in order and see if the sequence makes sense.
- When you check, avoid looking at the detail, as it can make you change your mind.
- Predict a possible sequence of headings before you look at the text.
- If a paragraph is difficult, use the various skimming techniques focusing on text development. Always look for change of direction in a text.
- Skim each paragraph in turn and then decide very quickly what it is about. Make your own heading in a couple of words. Then look at the list of headings and match.



Matching sentences/phrases to paragraphs

- ➤➤ See *Matching headings to paragraphs* on page 12 and follow the same basic techniques.
- As there are usually more paragraphs than sentences/phrases, you need to scan quickly.
- The sentences can relate to specific detail in a text. Look for general nouns, which summarize, like *description, references, cause, effect, importance*, etc. The words can be both singular and plural.
- As well as phrases linked to a general noun, there may be clauses introduced by *how* or statements of fact: *the fact that ...*
- Plural words are likely to indicate that the phrase/sentence covers a whole paragraph, so it is like a heading. A singular noun can also cover a whole or a part of a paragraph.
- If the phrases look like headings or lists, then look for a series of points.

Use the technique of skimming/scanning a paragraph for the organization as described in Technique 1 on Page 12.



- When you have found the information, check that the focus of the phrase paraphrases/ summarizes the text.

Completing summaries with and without a wordlist

Stage 1

- Check the instructions to find the word limit. It is usually one/two or three words – always keep this in mind.
- Also check if you can use a word/phrase more than once.
- Skim the summary first to get an idea of the overall meaning.
- Work out the grammar needed to fill in each space.
- When you are working out the answers, say the word *blank* for the space. Don't jump across to the word on the other side of the blank. For example, if you read *Candidates need to pay _____ to detail*, it is more difficult to feel what the missing word is. If you read *Candidates need to pay blank to detail*, it is easier to predict the missing word.

Stage 2

- Use collocation of words and ideas where possible to predict the answer and then check the text.
- Try to predict the answer by giving your own word. It is easier to match your own word than an empty space.
- Predict using general words. For example, you may know that the blank is a person. Look for this in the passage.
- The more aware you are of the general idea of the text, the closer your answer will be.
- If you are asked to complete with up to three words, try to think of a general word.

Stage 3

- Look at the text and match your words with words in the passage.
- Be careful with any changes in the grammatical form of a word.
- Skim the summary again with your words in place to check the overall meaning and then, if you have time, skim the text.
- When you put the answers in the Answer Sheet check the spelling is correct.
- If you have a wordlist, note the words/phrases in the list will usually have letters attached, A, B, C, etc. So you will only have to write a letter in the Answer Sheet.
- Read the list and insert the words/phrases one at a time, isolating the relevant grammar. This helps you see if the items are correct and fill the other blanks.

Answering multiple-choice questions

- In some cases, there may be five alternatives (A–E) rather than four. If there are five alternatives, you may have to choose one or more answers.
- Multiple-choice questions are like *True, False, Not Given* questions. One of the alternatives creates a statement, which is *True*. The other three are either contradictions or *Not Given*.
- Multiple-choice questions test specific detail where you are asked to analyse one part of a text, e.g. a fact.
- A multiple-choice question can test your understanding of the whole text, e.g. a question at the end about the purpose of the passage or with possible titles or summaries.

Stage 1

- Skim read all the questions for the passage to get the general picture.
- As you practise, and in the exam itself, cover the alternatives (A–D) with a pencil or a piece of paper and read the stem only.
- Focus on content words like nouns, names, verbs, etc. and also words that qualify the part of the sentence. Distinguish between the general topic of the passage and specific scanning words.
- Words that help qualify the stem help you to match it with an alternative and vice versa. So look for words like *more*, *usually*, modals like *should*, etc. and words that add qualities.
- Predict the answer where you can and try to complete the stem yourself. If the stem contains a cause, then you probably want an effect at the end of the sentence.
 ►► See *Reading* page 20 for general tips about prediction in reading.
- Reveal the first alternative and think about it quickly. Again focus on content and qualifying words.
- Read the stem again and reveal each of the alternatives in turn. It is easy to forget about the stem by the time you get to alternative D!
- Underline words that will help you as you scan.

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Stage 2

- Group the alternatives. Look for information that the alternatives have in common or that is different.
 - The alternatives may all be variations of the same basic detail with one piece of information that is different.
 - There may be two alternatives that are similar and two that are very different.
 - There may be two alternatives that contradict each other.
- Remember that if alternatives are the same, neither can be the answer.
- Keeping in mind the general picture of the passage, read the alternatives and predict the answer. Scan the passage to locate the answer and check your prediction.
- To prevent panic, think about the question and the text separately.
- When you are checking your prediction with the text, read the relevant part of the text and look away from the page when you are thinking.

Other strategies

- When you predict the answer by matching the stem with an alternative, think about which information logically fits together. Keep in mind the logic of the other questions and the passage.
- Read the answers to the multiple-choice questions you have done. Check that they form a logical picture.
- Do not answer the questions in isolation from each other.

A variation of the standard multiple-choice question is where you chose two items mentioned by the writer from a list of five. The same techniques apply.

Completing sentences

- Sentence completion exercises test your ability to extract specific detail from a text.
- Skim all the questions in the section.
- Work out what information is being tested.
- Check the word limit in the instructions.
- Read the stem of the sentence for completion and try to understand the meaning.
- Note any words that help you scan the text for the answer.
- Decide the grammar that you need to finish the sentence; most of the time it is a noun/noun phrase.
- Predict whether the answer contains an adjective only; an adjective and a noun; a gerund and a noun; or a gerund, an adjective and a noun.
- Try to look for more than one answer at the same time.

Answering questions

- ➤➤ See *Completing sentences* above and *Completing tables, flowcharts and diagrams* on page 18 and follow the same procedures.
- Look at the grammar of the question.
- Check what the question word at the beginning is. *What/Which/Who/Where* need nouns as answers. The word *How* may need: *by + -ing*, etc. or an adverb.

Completing tables, flowcharts and diagrams

- ➤➤ See *Completing sentences* on page 17 and follow the same procedures.
- Make sure you skim the whole flowchart to get the overall meaning.
- Tables are often quite long. Don't panic – remember, if a set of questions looks long, it is usually because it is easy.
- Check the grammar of the table/flowchart/diagram, i.e. is it in note form?
- The chart is usually in columns with headings. Check the types of words of the other items in each column.
- If you have a wordlist, follow the same procedure as for summaries. With diagrams find a reference point and work slowly round the diagram.

Matching names/dates to ideas

- You may be asked to match:
 - categories, names or dates with statements which are paraphrases of the text.
 - sentences which are paraphrases of particular items in a list.

In all cases, the basic techniques are the same.
- ➤➤ See *Matching sentences/phrases to paragraphs* on page 14 and follow the same procedures.
- Check if any name, category, etc. matches with more than one item.
- Read the names etc. and the statements.
- Note anything you are already aware of from reading the other questions.
- Read *all* the statements rather than just one at a time. You may then be able to match more than one at a time.
- If the list is long, reveal each item one at a time using your pencil to help you focus.
- Scan the passage for the names etc. Mark all of them first. Put a box around them to make it easier to distinguish between the names etc. and other underlined words.
- If you cannot find one name etc., quickly go on to the next. You may find the one you have missed while you are looking for something else.
- When you have finished, check you have entered your answers correctly and skim check the answers in the names and answers in the text.
- Make sure you do not contradict the other answers you have made.

Matching stems to sentences

- Skim the instructions, the sentence stems and the ends of sentences.
- Read through the stems to understand the meaning and underline only essential words.
- Try to predict which ending matches the stem. To help you, reveal them one at a time.
- Even if you cannot predict any of the answers, practise the technique of prediction. With practice, you will be able to see that ideas, like words in phrases/collocations, fit together. Knowing this will help you.
- If you have difficulty dealing with the information, break up the ideas and see if each part matches. Always think about meaning rather than words.

Matching questions to sentences

- ➤➤ See *Matching stems to sentences* above and follow the same procedures.
- If the list of alternatives to choose from is long, reveal them one at a time.

Answering *True, False, Not Given* questions

- In *True/False* exercises, *False* covers *False* and *Not Given*. If a statement is not *True* according to the text, it is classed as *False*. The statement can be *False*
 - because it contradicts the information in some way.
 - because there is no information about the statement in the passage.

These two aspects of *False* can then become separate items *False* and *Not Given*.

- A *False* statement contradicts the information in a passage:
 - because it is the direct opposite of the original text, e.g. the text says *North*, but the statement says *South*.
 - because it is the negative of the meaning in the original text.
 - because it is neither of these, but it is not the same as the information in the text.

Technique 1: analysing the statements

- If you read the statements in sequence, you can sometimes see where the information moves from relating to one paragraph to the next paragraph. Practise reading this type of statement without the text to see the development.
- Turn the statement into a question. You then have to answer *Yes/No*. If you can't, the answer is *Not Given*.
- Find the central or focal point of the statement. Imagine you are reading the statement aloud – where is the likely stress in the sentence?
- Look for words that qualify the sentence or make the sentence restrictive like *only, little, not many, sometimes, usually, largely*, etc. or agents like *by the police*, etc. or impersonal phrases like *it is suggested*.
- Look for words that are negative, e.g. *ignore, refuse, deny, reject* or words that are positive like *cover, help, like, favour*, etc.
- Look for comparisons of any kind.
- Check for further/previous plans/projects/ideas, etc. Maybe no information is given about 'others'.
- Reveal the statements one at a time to help you focus on them.

Technique 2: predicting and checking

- When you are thinking about the statement, use common sense to predict the answer. Check your prediction in the text.
- Understand the statement *before* you look at the text. Don't just underline the words that help you to scan for the answer in the text.
- When you find the information, analyse the text without thinking about the statement. This will stop you getting confused. Then read the statement carefully, look at the text and decide.
- When you are making your decision, follow the process of reading the statement, then the text.


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- If you read the statement, the text and then the statement again, you may get the wrong answer. For example:

Text: *The price will fall soon.*

Statement: *The price will go down.*

Answer: *True.*

Compare this with the following:

Text: *The price will go down.*

Statement: *The price will fall soon.*

Answer: *Not Given.*

- When you have finished, read the statements again in sequence and see if your answers fit the overall picture you have of the passage.

Answering **Yes, No, Not Given** questions

- The principles are the same as for *True, False, Not Given*. This type of question is used to analyse the claims or opinions of a writer.
- You need to make sure that the opinions that are given are those of the writer and not opinions of others reported by the writer.
- Questions can contain statements which pass a judgement on or evaluate a situation which is described in the text.
- Always check for comparisons. Comparisons are simple ways to make a comment and pass judgement. For example, in the statement *Swimming is more relaxing than walking*, a judgment is being made about the two items because one is put above the other.
- Always check for any adjective that judges a situation, e.g. *sensible, difficult, demanding*. Any adjective can pass a judgement, even simple adjectives like *big*: *That building is big*. Another person may not agree!
- Check always for adverbs in the question like *never, always, frequently, carefully*, etc as they will also change the meaning of a basic statement.
- Check for questions which contain reasons: *because, as, since*, etc.
- Check for any mention of development progression change ... *increasing/increasingly/rapidly ... is improving ...* Ask yourself if change is taking place.
- Check for contrast with numbers, e.g. *a solution* in the question as opposed to *a range of solutions* in the text. Distinguish between general and specific.