

IELTS: Reading

Task: A title always helps the candidates predict what the passage is going to be about. However, some of the reading passages in the exam do not have a title. For these passages, generally speaking, the last question related to the text will be a multiple-choice question related to the whole passage. Give candidates short passages with a multiple-choice question such as this. Introduce the habit of putting a multiple-choice question at the end of a piece of writing. This is also a good way to develop knowledge of topic sentences. You could also do it the other way round by giving the students just the title and then getting them to predict what it is going to be about. Then do the reading text and see if they were right.

Task: Encourage students to underline key words in the questions by going to the stem and marking only words like nouns, names, verbs or function words like 'because'. Then brainstorm, using the board, paraphrases or synonyms for the words they have underlined. Then do the reading and see if any of their words did come up as the answer in the text. This also can lead to vocabulary acquisition on a specific topic.

Task: Both skimming/scanning are important techniques to speed up the reading process. Take a passage and write on the board a number of words that appear in the passage and see how quickly students can find them. Competition encourages a bit of laughter and lightens up the class atmosphere. Get students in pairs to read alternate sentences in a passage only reading the nouns and verbs and see how much they can understand.

Familiarisation of question types builds confidence and also speeds up the exam reading process. Get students to look at instructions and note down: type of exam question, word limit, type of words that are needed e.g. verbs, nouns, adverbs, etc. After a while this will become second nature and will save half a minute here and there.