Preliminary (PET): Reading

At Preliminary (PET) level it's important that teachers show students that there are different ways of reading and these may not have been taught in the first language. Students in the exam will not have enough time to read every text slowly and carefully, so they have to be trained to move their eyes rapidly through a text focusing on key words and key ideas. As students are reading, watch how they are reading. Some students may use a finger or a pencil as they read (a good reading strategy for less able readers); others may spend a long time on one sentence; poor readers may get slowed down by a specific word or speak as they read.

Task: Always set time limits. Get the students to highlight key words in the questions. Then give them 1 minute, and see how much they have managed to pick up during that time. Get them to repeat the process, but this time give them 2 minutes.

Task: Get the students to look for a specific word, number or place. This will help them in locating information quickly and it can be fun to see who finds the line and place first.

Task: Trying to work out the meaning of unknown vocabulary from the context is a very important skill. It should be emphasized to the students that there will always be words in the text that they don’t know and that this should not cause panic. However, being able to work out roughly what something means can be extremely useful. Is it positive or negative? Related to transport? An education-related word? Take an easy text and put in pretend words over blanked out words in the text and see if students can work out what the words should be or the meaning. This will give them confidence that it is possible to work out from the text what unfamiliar words mean.

Task: Get students to find a particular word in the text and see if they can write a synonym for it, then discuss in class.

Task: Ask everyone to find a specific word as quickly as they can in the text. Ask one student to read out the sentence or sentences in the text to provide the context, then as a class discuss what the word might mean. This is also a good way of developing vocabulary as the word is in a sentence and not in isolation. Ensure that students record any new words under a specific topic.