



ثانوية التكنولوجيا التطبيقية  
Applied Technology High School

# **IELTS**

## **Academic Reading**

### **Overview**

## Table of Contents

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) .....	3
AN OVERVIEW OF IELTS ACADEMIC READING .....	4
ACADEMIC READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES IN IELTS.....	5
TIPS FOR TEACHERS.....	6
TIPS FOR STUDENTS.....	8
DEVELOPING ACADEMIC READING SKILLS.....	9
GENERAL READING VS. TEST PRACTICE.....	9
WHAT TO READ .....	9
HOW TO READ.....	9
GUESSING THE MEANING OF UNKNOWN WORDS FROM CONTEXT .....	9
ACTIVITIES WHERE SPEED IS EMPHASISED .....	10
LOCATING THE MAIN IDEA .....	10
VOCABULARY.....	10
VOCABULARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST .....	10
VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT .....	11
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT FOR READING COMPREHENSION .....	11
GUESSING THE MEANING OF WORDS FROM CONTEXT .....	11
COHESION .....	12
GRAMMAR AND MEANING.....	12

***\*Note – All materials in this document originate from the IELTS.org website. The information was made freely available to teachers and students.***

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **What aspects of reading are tested in IELTS Academic Reading?**

Candidates are tested on their ability to identify main ideas, supporting ideas, writer's opinions and specific information.

### **How long should candidates spend on each passage?**

Candidates have 60 minutes to read through three passages and answer 40 questions. Candidates are advised to spend about 20 minutes on each passage. Candidates should make sure that they do not waste time worrying about items they can't answer and that they use their time sensibly to read through what they can and answer as many questions as possible.

### **How do candidates record their answers?**

All answers must be entered on an Answer Sheet during the 60-minutes allowed. Candidates may first write their answers on the Question Paper if they wish to, but no extra time is allowed to transfer answers to the Answer Sheet.

### **How many different task types are there in IELTS Academic Reading?**

There are 10 basic task types, some with possible variations. A variety of task types are used in Academic Reading and more than one task type may be used for each passage. Some questions may appear before a passage and some may come after, depending on the nature of the questions.

**When the instructions state that the candidate should answer in, for example, NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS, would they lose marks by writing an answer with more than three words, even if one is 'a' or 'the'?**

Yes. Answers which exceed the word limit will be marked incorrect.

### **Are candidates penalised for spelling and grammar mistakes made in their answers?**

All words that candidates will need in order to answer the questions will be given in the passage, so they should be encouraged to transfer their answers to the Answer Sheet with care. Candidates should be aware that poor spelling and grammar are penalised.

### **How is the band score for Academic Reading calculated?**

One mark is awarded for each of the 40 questions in the test. A band score conversion table is produced for each version of Academic Reading, which translates scores out of 40 onto the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported as a whole band or a half band.

How does the Academic Reading score relate to the overall band score?

The overall score is an average of the band scores for the four Modules; the final score may be reported as a whole band or a half band.

## **An Overview of IELTS Academic Reading**

### **Module format**

IELTS Academic Reading has 3 passages and 40 items (questions). The number of items for any one passage may vary. Each item is worth one mark. The texts and items appear in Question Booklets.

### **Answer format**

Candidates record their responses on Answer Sheets.

### **Timing**

IELTS Academic Reading takes 60 minutes to complete. Candidates are not given extra time to transfer their answers onto the Answer Sheet. They should do this as they work through the test.

### **Marks**

One mark is awarded for each correct answer.

### **Texts**

The passages used in the test are based on authentic texts, and are taken from sources such as magazines, journals, books and newspapers. They are designed to present the candidate with materials similar to those which they might need to read on a university course. Passages may also contain non-verbal material such as diagrams, graphs, illustrations etc. The passages may be written in a variety of styles, for example narrative, descriptive or discursive/argumentative. They deal with issues which are interesting, recognisably appropriate, and accessible to candidates entering postgraduate or undergraduate courses or seeking professional registration. At least one of the passages will contain detailed argument.

### **Length**

The total word count for the three passages is between 2000 and 2750 words.

### **Task Types**

There are 10 basic task types, some with possible variations. They are:

- Task Type 1 Multiple Choice
- Task Type 2 Short-answer Questions
- Task Type 3 Sentence Completion
- Task Type 4 Notes, Summary or Table/Flow-chart Completion
- Task Type 5 Labelling a Diagram
- Task Type 6 Choosing Headings for Paragraphs or Sections of a Text
- Task Type 7 Locating Information
- Task Type 8 Identification of Writer's Views/Claims or of Information in a Text
- Task Type 9 Classification
- Task Type 10 Matching

## **Academic Reading Skills and Strategies in IELTS**

### **What reading skills are tested in IELTS Academic Reading?**

This is a test of reading comprehension in a general academic context. The texts used and the skills tested are intended to reflect the target language needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students, without bias for or against students of any particular discipline.

#### **Candidates may have to:**

- identify the writer's overall purpose, target audience, sources etc.
- identify and follow key arguments in a text
- identify opinions and attitudes as opposed to facts
- locate specific information
- read for detailed information
- extract relevant information
- distinguish the main idea from supporting detail
- recognise key points for a summary
- group pieces of information in a text in accordance with salient criteria
- extract information from a prose text to put into a diagrammatic representation
- make inferences
- use correct spelling and correct grammar in their answers

#### **How do we read text?**

In everyday life we use different strategies or approaches to read different texts. Sometimes we read quickly, skimming for general ideas or scanning for a specific point. Sometimes we read slowly, trying to gain a detailed understanding. How we read depends on the text – its length, its type – and our purpose in reading it.

#### **What is skimming?**

When we skim a text we read very quickly. We just look at the headings and subheadings and the first lines of each section or paragraph. We also notice the key words that are repeated throughout the text. Our purpose is to understand the **gist** – the general idea of the text. Skimming is a useful strategy to use throughout IELTS Academic Reading.

#### **What is scanning?**

When we scan a text we are looking for a specific piece of information or specific words. We ignore information that is not relevant to our purpose. Scanning is a useful strategy to apply when the questions ask for specific factual information. It is also a useful strategy to use to find the section of a text about which a question is asked.

#### **What is reading for detail?**

When we read for detail we read every word in a text and think carefully about the meaning of every sentence. It is often necessary in IELTS Academic Reading to read a certain section of a text in detail in order to answer a question correctly. Usually a candidate must skim or scan the text first to find the right section and then, having found the relevant section, read for detail.

## Tips for Teachers

- Remind students to read the instructions carefully. The instructions will tell them where to find the answers, what they need to do, what kind of answer is required of them, and how many words they need to write. The instructions will also tell them if an option can be used more than once and will remind them to transfer their answers to the Answer Sheet.
- Remind students which task types have questions which follow the order of information in the reading passage.
- Encourage students to read all the questions very carefully.
- Encourage students to scan for key words in the extracts or the reading passage that match the items. Encourage students to also scan for paraphrases of key words.
- Remind students that in tasks which involve writing words or numbers, e.g. Short-answer Questions, the answers have to be grammatically correct and should be spelt correctly. Accuracy in spelling and word form are very important and candidates will be penalised for incorrect spelling.
- Encourage students to use the information provided in the notes, tables, diagrams or flow-charts as well as any examples to predict the type of information that is required.
- In classroom activities, encourage students to discuss the type of information they need for each task type they might meet in the test.
- Encourage students to underline key words and phrases when they read, as well as paying attention to key words in the questions.
- Give students practice in recognising synonyms, summary words etc. to help them locate information.
- Give students practice in suggesting different ways of expressing the same ideas or information in a text.
- Give students practice in reading skills such as skimming and scanning for information.
- Some students are convinced that only test practice will really help them, and want to do test after test. This can be discouraging, as they do not see the rapid progress they would like. Encourage them to read widely, e.g. newspapers, journals, magazines and books, and use materials from these sources in your classroom activities.
- Make your students aware of the different text types and how best to approach them. Give practice in the full range of IELTS Academic Reading task types. Take time in class to discuss the differences between task types and the skills that are being tested.
- You should make sure that your students understand that there is more than one way to read a text. Some believe that they must read every text slowly and carefully, underlining every unknown word and stopping to worry about it. You should stress that their main aim is to locate the answers to the questions. They do not need to read in the same way they would if they needed to remember the contents of the texts. You should try to desensitise them to the presence of unknown words, and also give practice in guessing meaning from context. Discourage them from looking up every unknown word in the dictionary.
- Make sure that students read the instructions carefully in every case: many task types contain variations, and it is easy for students to confuse them if they do not check carefully what it is they are required to do.
- Stress that students should remain conscious of time limits during the test, and that they should move on rather than spending too much time on by a particular question to which they are unable to find the answer.
- Make students aware of the dangers of relying on locating the exact words in the text that they find in a question: give as much practice as you can in paraphrasing and locating paraphrase in a text.
- In task types where the information is located in order in the text, train students to avoid returning to the beginning of the text for each question.
- Advise students to take care when copying a word or words from the text onto their Answer Sheets. Copying incorrectly will lead to loss of marks.
- Make sure that students get practice in using an [Answer Sheet](#).

# Reading (Academic and General Training) Answer Sheet

Are you: Female? ☐ Male? ☐

Your first language code:

▶	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
▶	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
▶	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

## IELTS Reading Answer Sheet

Module taken (shade one box): Academic ☐ General Training ☐

1		✓ 1 ✕	21		✓ 21 ✕
2		2	22		22
3		3	23		23
4		4	24		24
5		5	25		25
6		6	26		26
7		7	27		27
8		8	28		28
9		9	29		29
10		10	30		30
11		11	31		31
12		12	32		32
13		13	33		33
14		14	34		34
15		15	35		35
16		16	36		36
17		17	37		37
18		18	38		38
19		19	39		39
20		20	40		40

Checker's Initials

Marker's Initials

Band Score

Reading Total

## Tips for Students

- Remember to read the instructions carefully. The instructions will tell you where to find the answers, what you need to do, what kind of answer is required, and how many words you need to write. The instructions will also tell you if an option can be used more than once, and will remind you to transfer your answers to your Answer Sheet.
- Remember that the questions for certain task types follow the order of information in the reading passage.
- Remember to read all the questions very carefully.
- Practise scanning for key words in the extracts or the reading passage that match the items. You can also practise scanning for paraphrases of key words.
- Remember that in most tasks which involve writing words or numbers, e.g. Short-answer Questions, the answers have to be grammatically correct and spelt correctly. Accuracy in spelling and word form are very important and you will be penalised for incorrect spelling.
- Use the information provided in the notes, tables, diagrams or flow-charts, as well as any examples, to predict the type of information that is required.
- In classroom activities, discuss the type of information you need for each task type you might meet in the test.
- Underline key words and phrases when you read as well as paying attention to key words in the questions.
- Practise using synonyms, summary words etc. to help you locate information.
- Practise different ways of expressing the same ideas or information in a text.
- Practise reading skills such as skimming and scanning for information.
- Some students are convinced that only test practice will really help them, and want to do test after test. This can be discouraging, as they do not see the rapid progress they would like. You should read widely, e.g. newspapers, journals, magazines and books, and use materials from these sources when preparing for the test.
- Be aware of the different text types and how best to approach them. Practise the full range of IELTS Academic Reading task types. Take time in class to discuss the differences between task types and the skills that are being tested.
- You should make sure that you understand that there is more than one way to read a text. Some students believe that they must read every text slowly and carefully, underlining every unknown word and stopping to worry about it. You should remember that your main aim is to locate the answers to the questions. You do not need to read in the same way you would if you needed to memorise something. You should try not to worry too much about the presence of unknown words, and you should also practise guessing meaning from context. Try not to look up every unknown word in the dictionary.
- Make sure that you read the instructions carefully in every case: many task types contain variations, and it is easy for you to confuse them if you do not check carefully what it is you are required to do.
- You should remain conscious of time limits during the test, and you should move on rather than spending too much time on a particular question to which you are unable to find the answer.
- Be aware of the dangers of relying on locating the exact words in the text that you find in a question: practise using paraphrases and locating paraphrase in a text.
- In task types where the information is located in order in the text, remember you don't need to go back to the beginning of the text for each question.
- Take care when you need to copy a word or words from the text onto your Answer Sheet. Copying incorrectly will lead to loss of marks.
- Make sure that you get some practice in using an [Answer Sheet](#).



## **Developing Academic Reading Skills**

IELTS Academic Reading tests students' ability to read, understand and answer questions on a range of text types at a reasonably high level of difficulty. Both global reading skills (skills needed to comprehend the main ideas of a text) and micro-skills (skills needed to locate and interpret detailed information in the text) are tested. Students may be expected to understand opinion and attitude and be able to distinguish these from fact. They will also be expected to distinguish main ideas from supporting points.

## **General Reading vs. Test Practice**

Students often feel that reading materials other than those from IELTS practice books are somehow irrelevant, and they may wish to do a great deal of test practice. While it is important to become familiar with the test, teachers should explain that improving their reading skills in general will inevitably improve their chances in the test, and that test practice alone may not result in this improvement of reading skills.

## **What to Read**

In training students to take IELTS Academic Reading, it is important for teachers to concentrate on improving students' reading skills in these areas, using generally available reading materials at a suitable level, rather than concentrating too much on test practice. Suitable practice materials might include book extracts; the editorial section of newspapers; feature articles (those which deal with topics of general interest rather than daily news); general interest magazines; journals. If none of these are available, reading texts from coursebooks could be used with specially adapted tasks provided by the teacher.

## **How to Read**

Many students are unfamiliar with the idea of adapting their reading habits according to the text and the task. They may have been trained (at school, for example) to read every word slowly and carefully, and not to move on until they have understood everything. It is important to break these habits. The paragraphs which follow outline some of the skills that students need to acquire or practise.

## **Guessing the meaning of unknown words from context**

Teachers can introduce this idea by offering sentences containing a nonsense word – for example 'When I got home I found that the postman had delivered several xxxyls.' – and asking questions such as

What could a xxxyl be? (Answers might include a letter, a parcel, a magazine, a bill etc) – see the activity [I've Never Seen That Word Before](#) to practise this.

Teachers could then move on to short paragraphs, using an unknown word in one or two of the sentences, preferably where the word would not have much impact on the general meaning of the sentence. Short periods of this sort of practice may move students away from the belief that an unknown word spells disaster.

## Activities where speed is emphasised

Many students feel daunted by the idea that they must read quickly during the test. Any activity where speed is emphasised can help to break down the idea that reading slowly and carefully is the only way to understanding. Teachers could begin by setting very simple scanning tasks (asking students to locate names or other nouns that occur in the text). This can help to build up confidence. Teachers could then move on to ask students to locate simple synonyms (asking students to find a word meaning 'a building' – 'house' perhaps, or a word meaning 'a vehicle' – maybe 'truck'.) Gradually increase the difficulty of the exercise; tasks should be moderately challenging, but should not be too far beyond the ability level of the majority of your students. [Find It Fast](#) is an activity that will help reinforce the idea of speed.

## Locating the Main Idea

You can help your students to separate the main idea from attendant details by teaching them how paragraphs are constructed:

- a main idea expressed in a topic sentence which often comes at or close to the beginning of the paragraph, or sometimes at the end;
- explanations, examples or other detailed information designed to expand on or clarify the main idea

See the activity [Put It Together](#) to assist with this.

## Vocabulary

Any activity which helps to expand students' vocabularies will be useful in helping them to perform tasks based on understanding paraphrase. Encourage your students to use learners' dictionaries which offer a lot of example sentences to help them with usage. You should discourage the use of bilingual dictionaries which, while useful for elementary students, prevent more advanced students from experiencing the constant paraphrase practice they get from using an English-English dictionary. See the activity [Paraphrase Quiz](#) for assistance with this.

## Vocabulary of Special Interest

It is important to make students aware of vocabulary which may occur frequently in certain text types. For example, in discussion texts, or those which report on a variety of opinions, students need to be familiar with a range of words and phrases such as 'x agreed with/disagreed with/questioned the findings of y', 'x queried the validity of y's data' or 'x claimed that y's conclusions were not well-supported'. Further examples of statements of agreement or disagreement could be collected from a suitable text. Verbs used in quoting may also be useful for this type of text; you could for example, teach students to differentiate between words such as 'stated', 'claimed', 'denied', 'admitted', 'implied' etc.

## **Vocabulary Development**

In order to understand a text written in English it is necessary to understand the majority of the words in the text.

Encourage students to identify the types of words that are useful to learn – the ones that appear in many different texts – and to distinguish these from words that have low usage. Remind them that the meaning of very low frequency words, which are central to the comprehension of the text, will be given in a glossary. However, this only occurs infrequently. Encourage students to experiment with different ways of expanding their vocabulary. They can create their own vocabulary book and organise it either alphabetically or functionally. They should not only write the meaning of words in their own language, but write many examples of its usage in English. They can also write synonyms and antonyms as well as words representing bigger categories to which this word belongs.

## **Language Development for Reading Comprehension**

Many of the reading skills candidates need for IELTS Academic Reading apply to all situations in which they need to read in English. Success in IELTS Academic Reading is influenced by the candidates' ability to apply these skills, as well as their general proficiency in the English language.

You can assist your students in applying these skills and develop their general proficiency in English by encouraging them to:

- expand their vocabulary
- guess the meaning of words in context
- understand the different forms of cohesion
- increase their understanding of English grammar

## **Guessing the Meaning of Words from Context**

Students should be encouraged to try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words using clues in the context. These clues may be in the surrounding words. The text may provide a definition that explains the unfamiliar word, or it may give examples to illustrate the unfamiliar word. There may be connecting words used after the familiar word that indicate similarity or contrast. If the student is familiar with the item that is being compared or contrasted this should provide a clue to the unknown word. Another strategy is to break the word down into syllables. Sometimes knowledge of common roots and affixes or similarity to words in the students' own language can help them guess the meaning of a particular word.

## Cohesion

It is important to develop in students an awareness of the different ways that the meanings in one sentence in a text are connected with the meanings in other sentences. There are a number of different ways of showing connections between sentences.

### These include:

- the use of **reference** words such as pronouns (it, he, she, this, those etc.) and the use of articles (first reference may be with 'a' and the next references to the same thing with 'the')
- the use of **words** referring to the same thing; either the same word repeated or synonyms or class terms used
- the use of **connecting words** to show the relationship in meaning such as 'also', 'as a result' and 'in contrast'
- the use of **substitution words** such as 'such' or 'so' that take the place of whole phrases or sentences
- the **omission of words** that the reader is expected to understand because they were used in a previous sentence

## Grammar and Meaning

It is important to develop students' understanding of English grammar so that they know when different sentence structures are used to convey the same meaning and when different sentence structures convey a difference in meaning.

They should know, for example, that a sentence such as 'The ancient Olympics were abolished by the Roman Emperor Theodosius' has the same meaning as 'The Roman Emperor Theodosius abolished the ancient Olympics'. The same meaning can be expressed using the passive voice of the verb and the active voice of the verb.

Similarly, they should know that a change in the tense of the verb, for example, may make the meaning in a statement quite different. A sentence such as 'The Scandinavians have objected to a winter games' means something quite different from 'The Scandinavians object to a winter games'.