

Reading Strategies: Seminar Materials

Activity 1: Reading skills and strategies

Match the following skills with their definitions:

- Predicting
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Detailed reading
- Guessing unknown words
- Understanding main
- Inferring
- Understanding text

organisation

- Assessing a writer's
- Evaluating a writer's

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C This is when you look quickly through a text, but involves looking for specific words, phrases or items of information as quickly as possible. In other words, it involves rapid reading for the *specific* rather than the general, for *particular details* rather than the overall idea.

F A second or third reading of a text will also focus on the secondary ideas and details which support, explain and develop the main ideas. This can be described as a more comprehensive reading. It involves a slower and more careful reading process.

H This involves reading quickly through a text to get an overall idea of its contents. Features of the text that can help you include the title, subtitle(s), details about the author, abstract, introductory paragraph, first, second and last sentences of following paragraphs and the concluding paragraph. Focusing on these will give you an understanding of the overall idea or gist of the text, i.e. a general as opposed to a detailed understanding.

ideas

purpose
attitude

G Writers structure their writing in many different ways. Recognising the way in which a text has been structured will help you understand its meaning more fully. A writer may want, for example, to outline a situation, discuss a problem and propose a solution. This will usually result in a particular pattern of organisation. Or a writer may want to compare and contrast two ideas and will choose one of two basic structures commonly used to compare and contrast.

J Sometimes it's difficult to see what the main ideas of a passage are, or to distinguish between important and unimportant information. It is important that you learn to read for a general sense rather than for the meaning of every word. Knowing the key points in a reading text is vital in assessing its importance and relevance for your needs. It will also lead you to an understanding of a writer's organisation.

E The text organisation a writer selects will partly depend upon his or her particular aim. A writer may want to *inform* or *persuade*, and will select a structure or pattern of organisation according to what they want to do. Where a writer intends to do both, it is often helpful to try to assess which of these seems to be more important or dominant.

D Before reading a passage, we usually subconsciously ask ourselves what we know about the subject matter. This makes it easier to see what information is new to you and what information you already know about as you read the passage. Developing this technique ensures that as you read, you are not overloaded with too much information.

B Sometimes a writer will suggest or express something indirectly in a text. In other words, a writer will *imply* something and leave it to the reader to understand what is meant. When writers do this, they rely to some extent on the knowledge of their readers – knowledge of a subject or cultural knowledge, for example.

I Writers are not necessarily neutral or objective when they write, particularly if they are trying to persuade readers to agree with their opinions. It is important that you recognise what a writer's opinion or approach is in relation to the ideas or information being presented. This is because such opinions can influence the way in which the information is presented.

A It is unlikely that you will understand 100% of the vocabulary in a text, especially at first reading. Use first the immediate and wider *contexts* and then your own knowledge of the subject to help you work out meanings you are unsure of. At your first reading of a text it is usually best not to stop and consult your dictionary. This will interrupt your process of reading and understanding. Often specific meanings become clear as you continue to read through the text. The