**IELTS Reading Instructions and Tips**

The reading skills required (prediction, finding specific information, identifying opinion etc.) are the same for both academic and general tests. The styles of question, for example, multiple choice, sentence completion etc., are also the same.

The only difference is the type of text you will be given. This is to reflect the different expectations and motivations of both types of candidate. On the Academic paper there will be three long academic texts that are similar to the type of reading you might expect at university. The readings are taken from academic journals, magazines, books and newspapers.

On the General Training paper, you will be given a mixture of long and short texts of a much more general nature and some related to work or social situations. The readings are taken from notices, flyers, timetables, documents, newspapers, instructions and manuals.

You will have one hour to complete 40 questions in full and to write your answers on the answer sheet.

The reading paper will test a number of different skills, including:

* Completing a diagram, table or summary
* Tell the difference between main ideas and supporting details
* Find specific information
* Identify the writer’s opinion
* Follows key arguments
* Identify the writer’s purpose

The reading test is also as much a vocabulary test as it is a reading test because most of the answers will be synonyms or paraphrases of the question.

There are several different question types all designed to test different reading skills. It is essential that you familiarize yourself with each different question type.

* [Sentence completion](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/28/ielts-reading-sentence-completion-tips/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [Summary, note, table, flow-chart completion](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/29/ielts-reading-summary-completion/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [Short-answer questions](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/06/11/ielts-reading-short-answer-questions/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [Diagram label completion](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/27/ielts-reading-labeling-a-diagram-tips/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [Multiple choice](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/30/ielts-reading-multiple-choice-questions/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [Matching information](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/05/01/ielts-reading-matching-information-to-paragraphs/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [Matching headings](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/03/04/ielts-reading-matching-headings-tips-and-strategy/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [Matching sentence endings](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/28/ielts-reading-matching-sentence-endings-tips/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)
* [True, false, not given](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/27/ielts-reading-true-false-not-given-tips/?utm_ar_id_=0ba7627517b03a459f4763c608d64d22_7c1e94747888748582ff03c58e19caf3)

They are as follows:

### [Sentence completion](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/28/ielts-reading-sentence-completion-tips/) – *these question types, you will be given a number of sentences with gaps in them and asked to complete the sentences with words from the reading text. These questions are as much vocabulary tests as they are reading tests because they require you to be aware of paraphrasing (using different words to repeat a sentence so that it has the same meaning) and synonyms (words with the same or very similar meanings).*

### [Summary, note, table, flow-chart completion](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/29/ielts-reading-summary-completion/) - *In summary completion question types, you will be given a summary of information from the text and there will be some gaps in that summary. You will either be given a list of words to fill the gaps with or asked to find the answers in the reading text. Your job is to insert some of the words from the list into the gaps, or if asked, to fill the gaps with words from the text. There will be more words in the list than required to fill the gaps. All of the information contained in the summary will also be contained in the reading text, but they will use*[*synonyms and paraphrasing*](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/28/ielts-reading-sentence-completion-tips/)*, so don’t expect to see the same words.*

### [Short-answer questions](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/06/11/ielts-reading-short-answer-questions/) - *These questions are often called ‘comprehension’ questions and they are very common in English classrooms all over the world. Most students have answered these kinds of questions before and for this reason, most students tend to do quite well with them.*

### [Diagram label completion](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/27/ielts-reading-labeling-a-diagram-tips/) - *You might get a question that asks you to label a diagram. There are three kinds of diagrams you might get: a technical drawing of a machine or invention, something from the natural world or a design or plan.*

### [Multiple choice](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/30/ielts-reading-multiple-choice-questions/) - *You are likely to be asked multiple choice questions. Your job is to simply choose the correct answer from a list of possible choices. There are three different types of MCQ question. You will either have to:*

### *choose one answer out of four options*

### *choose two answers out of five options*

### *choose three answers out of six options*

### *The first option is the most common. You may also have two different question forms. Either: completing a sentence or answering a question.*

### [Matching information](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/05/01/ielts-reading-matching-information-to-paragraphs/) - *In this kind of question, you are asked to match statements to paragraphs in the reading text. The statements could be reasons, descriptions, summaries, definitions, facts or explanations. What they are doesn’t really matter. You are not expected to have specialist knowledge in the reading test. You do not need to understand what the whole paragraph is about, just find specific information****in****the paragraph and match it to one of the statements. The answer will normally be contained in a whole phrase or sentence, rather than a single word.*

### [Matching headings](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/03/04/ielts-reading-matching-headings-tips-and-strategy/) - *you may be asked to match headings to sections of text. This type of question tests your ability to understand the main idea of each paragraph. Headings are short sentences that summarize the information in a paragraph. You have to pick the one that best summarizes the information in a paragraph. You will be given between 5 and 7 headings and asked to match each paragraph in the reading text to one heading. There are always more headings than paragraphs.*

### [Matching sentence endings](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/28/ielts-reading-matching-sentence-endings-tips/) – *you* *might be asked to complete a ‘matching sentence endings’ question type. In this question, you will be given a list of incomplete sentences with no endings and another list with possible endings. Your job is to match the incomplete sentences with the correct ending based on the reading text. This is not one of the more common questions but should be studied all the same. You are being tested on your understanding of how the ideas in the sentences are connected to the main ideas in the reading text.*

### [True, false, not given](https://www.ieltsadvantage.com/2015/04/27/ielts-reading-true-false-not-given-tips/) – *these questions require you to identify if information in a text is true or not. You will be given a number of factual statements and you have to check the text to see if they are true or not or if the information is just not given. This is probably the most difficult question on the reading paper.*

### Reading Tips

**You will NOT know every word**

Don’t expect to know all the words and if you don’t look at the words and sentences around the word to find a clue for its meaning or just move on and skip that word. If you worry about the word you will panic and lose time and concentration.

During your preparation it is a good idea to research new words or phrases once you have completed your test and checked your answers.

**Practice your reading skills**

It is important to familiarize yourself with the IELTS reading test, IELTS reading tips and gain an understanding of the various questions and how to answer them.

Reading books, newspapers, magazine or even blogs in English each day will help you improve your reading skills as well as your vocabulary.

**Read the instructions VERY carefully**

Make sure you pay close attention to the instructions as they are quite specific, if you don’t follow the instructions you will get the question wrong.

For example, the instructions might state ‘write two words and/or a number’. This could mean: One word or One word and a number  
 Two words or Two words and a number

**Don’t panic**

There are always easy and difficult questions, do not spend a long time on one question as you won’t have time to answer the remaining questions. If you can’t find the answer move on to the next and come back to the difficult question later, sometimes answering the other questions will help.

**It’s really a vocabulary test rather than a reading test**

They will use synonyms and paraphrased sentences between the text and questions to test your vocabulary range so it is important to be aware of this in your preparation.

While preparing for IELTS it is a great idea to research synonyms and antonyms of words you already know and new words. Write a list in a notebook and try to use them in your speaking and writing practice tests.

**Timing is crucial**

The test gets more difficult as you work through the sections, allowing yourself less time for section 1 and more time for section 3 is advisable.

Also try to not spend too much time reading the text, remember you need to answer the questions. Allowing 13 – 16 minutes reading and 4 – 7 minutes answering the questions, transferring the answers and reviewing. Everyone reads at different speeds, so workout a technique that works for you.

**Practice slowly at first**

Remember that when starting out preparing for IELTS you are not only practicing to skim read but also you are learning how to answer the different questions types. Focusing on time in the beginning will put too much pressure on yourself and you won’t be reflecting on how to answer the specific questions, spotting patterns in questions.

Once you have practiced several practice tests slowly and have a good understanding of the questions types and how to answer them then you can start focusing on time.

**Leave no blanks**

Even if you don’t know the answer then guess it as you never know you might get lucky.