

## Test section – Reading

# Developing Reading Skills

### Activities

1. Surveying – matching and short-answer questions
2. Skimming – marking up the text
3. Scanning – finding key words and completing a table
4. Test practice

### Aims

- to provide students with skills to approach the IELTS Reading Test
- to develop students' awareness of the importance of applying these skills in order to read and answer questions more effectively and efficiently

### Learning outcomes

- Students will have practised how to survey a text for basic information.
- Students will have practised how to skim to locate topic sentences, understand the gist of the text, and have a better idea of the organisation of the text.
- Students will have practised how to scan to quickly locate key words and question answers.

### Information about this section of IELTS

In the Reading test there are 40 questions, designed to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical arguments and recognising writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose. The test takes 60 minutes. The IELTS Academic Reading Test includes three long texts which range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. These are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. They have been selected for a non-specialist audience but are appropriate for people entering university courses or seeking professional registration.

The IELTS General Training Reading Test has three sections. Section 1 may contain two or three short texts or several shorter texts. Section 2 comprises two texts. In Section 3, there is one long text. These texts include extract from books, magazines, newspapers, notices, advertisements, company handbooks and guidelines. These are materials you are likely to encounter on a daily basis in an English-speaking environment.

<b>Time</b>	45-60 minutes
<b>Level</b>	B1+
<b>Class</b>	Suitable for groups / large classes, F2F / Online
<b>Interaction</b>	Individual / pair work
<b>Materials</b>	Worksheet (attached)

**Material:** Worksheet (Exercises 1-4)

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Procedure:**

- introduce the focus of the lesson – reading skills for the IELTS Reading Test.
- ask students what problems they have (or think they might have) with this part of the test. (time is usually a main issue)
- explain that with 3 texts or sections and 40 questions to answer in 60 minutes, it is crucial to 'read' differently to be more efficient and effective.
- put students into pairs or small groups. Tell them to discuss the 3 scenarios on the Worksheet (Exercise 1). Give them about 5 minutes and get class feedback.

**Possible answers**

- a) title/author/the cover/the blurb on the back/price/how long or short it is
  - b) quickly look at parts of the article (headline, pictures, photos, sub-headings) to see if it really is interesting
  - c) quickly look down list of email for the name or subject
- 
- explain that these 3 ways of 'reading' (surveying, skimming and scanning) are skills that are very important in the Reading Test.
  - tell students to work alone and match the skill with its description (Exercise 2).

**Answers**

A3, B1, C2

- tell students that they will have 20 seconds to survey a text (Exercise 3).
- tell them to turn the page over when you say 'go'.
- say 'go' and give students just 20 seconds and then tell them to turn the page back over so they cannot see the text.
- students work alone to answer the 5 questions a-e (Exercise 4).
- put students into pairs to compare answers and get class feedback.

**Answers**

a yes      b no      c no      d yes      e  $\frac{3}{4}$  page

- point out that if there are specialist or technical words than non-specialists are not expected to know, they will be explained in a glossary at the end of the text.
- ask: what was the title? (A Remarkable Beetle) Or, what is the article about? (beetles)

**Material:** Worksheet (Exercises 5-6)

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Procedure:**

- introduce the focus of the exercises – skimming for gist and organisation.
- it is worth explaining that in good academic writing, each paragraph has just one main topic, and that this is expressed as a topic sentence. So, the topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph is about. It is often, but not always, the first sentence. Locating and reading the topic sentence is essential to understanding the gist and the organisation of the text. You may also wish to point out that they should write clear topic sentences in their essay in Writing Task 2.
- tell students that they will have 60 seconds to skim the (same) text by:
  - locating, reading and underlining the topic sentence in each paragraph
  - reading the final sentence in each paragraph
- get class feedback. In this case, the topic sentences are the first sentences.
- put students into pairs. Tell them to look at the topics a-e (Exercise 6) and, looking **only** at the topic sentences, decide which paragraph they would look for information about these topics.
- give students about 3 minutes to complete this task and then get class feedback.

**Answers**

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| a) | different species of beetles                | C |
| b) | how the beetles get into the field          | A |
| c) | what happens at different parts of the year | C |
| d) | what the beetles do inside the cowpat       | B |
| e) | information about climate and the beetles   | C |

- you may wish to recap before going onto the scanning exercises.
- elicit what the students have done so far.
  - In a short time, students have surveyed the text so they know the extent of the text, the topic of the text (from the title) and what help is available (the glossary). They have skimmed the text so now know how it is organised: spreading the beetles in the field, what the beetles do inside the cowpats, and different types of beetles.

**Material:** Worksheet (Exercises 7-10)

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Procedure:**

- introduce the focus of the exercises – scanning for key words.
- tell students to work in pairs. They look at the table and answer the questions (Exercise 7).
- get class feedback.

**Answers**

information about 3 species of beetle

French, Spanish, South African, ball-rolling/ball roller

- ask students based on their skimming of the topic sentences, which paragraph has information about different species. (C)
- elicit what scanning is. (Reading a text with the specific purpose of extracting information such as numbers, facts, words etc.)
- tell students they have 45 seconds to scan paragraph C and to underline/highlight all mentions of the key words (Exercise 8).
- students work in pairs to compare their results.
- students work in pairs and discuss what information is missing about the Spanish species (Exercise 9). (#9 preferred climate / #10 start of active period / #11 generations per year.
- they do the same for the South African ball-rolling species. (#12 preferred climate / #13 complementary species)
- tell students that in order to complete the table, they must read the information around, close-reading the critical key words (Spanish / South African ball-rolling) to find the answers.

- give students 5 minutes to complete the table (Exercise 10).
- put students into pairs to compare answers.
- get class feedback and allow for discussion on how students used close-reading skills to find their final answers (Exercise 11).

## Answers

9 temperate

10 early spring

11 two to five / 2-5

12 sub-tropical

13 South African tunneling / tunneling

## A Remarkable Beetle

**A** Introducing dung<sup>1</sup> beetles into a pasture is a simple process: approximately 1,500 beetles are released, a handful at a time, into fresh cow pats<sup>2</sup> in the cow pasture. The beetles immediately disappear beneath the pats digging and tunnelling and, if they successfully adapt to their new environment, soon become a permanent, self-sustaining part of the local ecology. In time they multiply and within three or four years the benefits to the pasture are obvious.

**B** Dung beetles work from the inside of the pat so they are sheltered from predators such as birds and foxes. Most species burrow into the soil and bury dung in tunnels directly underneath the pats, which are hollowed out from within. Some large species originating from France excavate tunnels to a depth of approximately 30 cm below the dung pat. These beetles make sausage-shaped brood chambers along the tunnels. The shallowest tunnels belong to a much smaller Spanish species that buries dung in chambers that hang like fruit from the branches of a pear tree. South African beetles dig narrow tunnels of approximately 20 cm below the surface of the pat. Some surface-dwelling beetles, including a South African species, cut perfectly-shaped balls from the pat, which are rolled away and attached to the bases of plants.

**C** For maximum dung burial in spring, summer and autumn, farmers require a variety of species with overlapping periods of activity. In the cooler environments of the state of Victoria, the large French species (2.5 cms long), is matched with smaller (half this size), temperate-climate Spanish species. The former are slow to recover from the winter cold and produce only one or two generations of offspring from late spring until autumn. The latter, which multiply rapidly in early spring, produce two to five generations annually.

The South African ball-rolling species, being a sub-tropical beetle, prefers the climate of northern and coastal New South Wales where it commonly works with the South African tunneling species. In warmer climates, many species are active for longer periods of the year.

## Glossary

1. dung: the droppings or excreta of animals
2. cow pats: droppings of cows

<https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/ielts-web-static/production/Sample-tests/ielts-academic-reading-sample-tasks-2023.pdf>

## Reading

## Worksheet

### Identifying Reading Skills

1 *Work with a partner or in small groups. Discuss the following scenarios:*

a) You are casually looking around in a bookshop (or online) looking for something to read. What do you look at?

b) You are looking at a news website or newspaper and you see an article that you think might be interesting. What do you do?

c) You are looking at your email inbox for an important email. What do you look for?

2 *Match each reading skill with its description.*

A	<b>Surveying</b>	1	Reading a text very quickly to get the general understanding and to get an idea of the organisation of the text.
B	<b>Skimming</b>	2	Reading a text with the specific purpose of extracting information such as numbers, facts, words etc.
C	<b>Scanning</b>	3	Looking at a text very quickly before reading to get an idea of lay-out: title, pictures, graphs, headings, glossary etc.

3 *When your teacher says 'go', turn over the page and follow the instruction at the top of the page.*

4 *Answer these questions.*

- |   |                    |                       |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|
| a | Does the text have | a title?              |
| b |                    | sub-headings?         |
| c |                    | diagrams or pictures? |
| d |                    | a glossary?           |

e      How long is the text?      ½ page      ¾ page      1 page

**Survey the text.** You have 20 seconds.

## **A Remarkable Beetle**

**A** Introducing dung<sup>1</sup> beetles into a pasture is a simple process: approximately 1,500 beetles are released, a handful at a time, into fresh cow pats<sup>2</sup> in the cow pasture. The beetles immediately disappear beneath the pats digging and tunnelling and, if they successfully adapt to their new environment, soon become a permanent, self-sustaining part of the local ecology. In time they multiply and within three or four years the benefits to the pasture are obvious.

**B** Dung beetles work from the inside of the pat so they are sheltered from predators such as birds and foxes. Most species burrow into the soil and bury dung in tunnels directly underneath the pats, which are hollowed out from within. Some large species originating from France excavate tunnels to a depth of approximately 30 cm below the dung pat. These beetles make sausage-shaped brood chambers along the tunnels. The shallowest tunnels belong to a much smaller Spanish species that buries dung in chambers that hang like fruit from the branches of a pear tree. South African beetles dig narrow tunnels of approximately 20 cm below the surface of the pat. Some surface-dwelling beetles, including a South African species, cut perfectly-shaped balls from the pat, which are rolled away and attached to the bases of plants.

**C** For maximum dung burial in spring, summer and autumn, farmers require a variety of species with overlapping periods of activity. In the cooler environments of the state of Victoria, the large French species (2.5 cms long), is matched with smaller (half this size), temperate-climate Spanish species. The former are slow to recover from the winter cold and produce only one or two generations of offspring from late spring until autumn. The latter, which multiply rapidly in early spring, produce two to five generations annually.

The South African ball-rolling species, being a sub-tropical beetle, prefers the climate of northern and coastal New South Wales where it commonly works with the South African tunneling species. In warmer climates, many species are active for longer periods of the year.

### **Glossary**

1. dung:            the droppings or excreta of animals
2. cow pats:       droppings of cows

<https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/ielts-web-static/production/Sample-tests/ielts-academic-reading-sample-tasks-2023.pdf>

5 **Skim the text.**

Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph.

Highlight or underline the topic sentence of each paragraph.

6 **Work with a partner. Using the information in the topic sentences *only*, decide in which paragraph (A, B or C) you would look in to find the following information.**

**A** Introducing dung<sup>1</sup> beetles into a pasture is a simple process: approximately 1,500 beetles are released, a handful at a time, into fresh cow pats<sup>2</sup> in the cow pasture

**B** Dung beetles work from the inside of the pat . . .

**C** For maximum dung burial in spring, summer and autumn, farmers require a variety of species with overlapping periods of activity.

Paragraph A, B or C?

a)	different species of beetles	
b)	how the beetles get into the field	
c)	what happens at different parts of the year	
d)	what the beetles do inside the cowpat	
e)	information about climate and the beetles	

7 *Work with a partner. Look at the table below and answer the questions.*

What is the table showing?

What are the key words?

8 **Scan** the text and underline / highlight all mentions of the key words in paragraph C.

9 *Work with a partner. Discuss what information is missing about the Spanish species and the South African ball-rolling species.*

Species	Size	Preferred climate	Complementary species	Start of active period	Number of generations per year
French	2.5 cm	cool	Spanish	late spring	1 - 2
Spanish	1.25 cm	9 .....		10 .....	11 .....
South African ball roller		12 .....	13 .....		

10 Work alone and complete the table with the missing information.

Questions 9 – 13

Complete the table below.

Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer. Write your answers in boxes 9-13 on your answer sheet.

Species	Size	Preferred climate	Complementary species	Start of active period	Number of generations per year
French	2.5 cm	cool	Spanish	late spring	1 - 2
Spanish	1.25 cm	9 .....		10 .....	11 .....
South African ball roller		12 .....	13 .....		

11 Discuss the following questions with a partner / in your group.

Did you **close-read** all of the text to find answers to questions 9-13?

Which parts of the texts did you close-read?

Why was it important to read these parts closely?