

Reading Comprehension Skills

Reading For General Communication
November 2008

To start with...

- To read well and to comprehend the content of a text easily, readers need to master and apply appropriate reading strategies.
- One's reading strategies will basically improve in line with the improvement in reading comprehension skills.
- Readers may find that to comprehend different kinds of texts they often have to switch from one strategy to another, indicating that it is not merely about **what we read** but also about **how read it.**

Some Important Reading Skills

1. Skimming and Scanning
2. Checking Vocabulary in Context
3. Checking Topic and Main ideas
4. Checking Purpose and Organizational Patterns
5. Checking Reference Words
6. Checking Details and Factual Information
7. Making Inferences
8. Checking Author's Attitude and the Tone of the Passage.

Skimming and Scanning

- **Skimming** means reading quickly to figure out the general meaning of a text. What to find out includes the topic, the main ideas, and the general organization of a passage.
- Scanning involves **“knowing what information you need to find before you read.”** What you need to do is to move your eyes quickly to find the piece of information you need. Scanning becomes very important when you need to look for and to locate a fact or a detail or a particular vocabulary word.

Look at the following piece of text

NO	AIRLINES	DESTINATION	DEPARTURE	GATE
1.	Sriwijaya Air	Denpasar	5.30 a.m.	6
2.	Lion Air	Surabaya	11.50 a.m.	5
3.	Merpati Nusantara	Medan	1.45 p.m.	6
4.	Garuda Indonesia	Yogyakarta	5.00 p.m.	7

1. What kind of text do you think it is?
2. What time does the plane to Surabaya depart?
3. Which airline serves the flight to Yogyakarta?
4. To which gate do we need to go if we want to take a flight to Medan?

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Sometimes called puma, panther, or mountain lion, the agile cougar has a greater natural range than any other mammal in the Western Hemisphere except humans. However, long viewed as a threat to livestock, it has been intensively hunted since the arrival of European colonists to the Americas and was almost extinct by the early twentieth century. While protective measures have been implemented in the United States, humans continue to destroy the cougar's habitat, further endangering this solitary cat.

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1. This passage is about:

- a. a person
- b. a place
- c. an animal
- d. a time

2. This passage discusses:

- a. a problem
- b. an opinion
- c. a solution
- d. a policy

3. The author of this passage expresses:

- a. love
- b. joy
- c. concern
- d. anger

Checking Vocabulary in Context

- Many writers try to help their readers understand the information in a reading passage by providing “cues”, or “aids” in their writing. They do this to clarify, define, and explain difficult concepts, and key words and expressions in the passages.

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- The ways writers provide common context cues include:
 1. **Contrast:** It was **adversity**, not prosperity, that shape the lives of the early American pioneers.
 2. **Example:** Pioneer women met **adversity** head on; they used paper for windows, carried water for miles for the weekly washing, and made do with corn meal rather than flour for the daily baking.
 3. **Definition:** The **adversities** of the winter—that is, the hardships and calamities that the family lived with daily—disappeared with the warmth of spring.

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4. **Appositive**: Locusts (the dreaded migratory grasshoppers of the prairies) could destroy a family's whole corn crop in a matter of minutes. From these *adversities, the trials and tribulations of the times*, came the legends of hardy American pioneers.

5. **Series**: The diaries of the early farmers told of hardships, calamities, and *adversities* that made their lives miserable: lack of water for daily use, sudden epidemics that wiped out whole families, and severe blizzards that kept people house-bound for weeks.

6. **Parallelism**: The settlers never gave up. They struggled through the early years, dealt with their difficulties, and in the end overcame their *adversities*.

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7. **WH marker**: Relative pronouns (like *where*, *when*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, *that*) often suggest the meaning of words and phrases.

e.g. **The cold-cellar** was *where* the farmers stored their fruits and vegetables for winter.

8. **Reason logically particularly by using other words in the sentence and the passage.**

9. **Use your knowledge of the world and personal experience**

10. **Punctuation** (like the use of comma, semicolon, colon), **italic, and abbreviations**

Continued...

- In the example sentences above, the word “adversity” is closest in meaning to:
 - a. difficulty
 - b. contrast
 - c. good luck
 - d. prosperity

Find the meaning of the words in italic

- Not all newcomers turn out to be producers, directors, or Hollywood starlets; the majority end up doing *mundane* tasks such as typing and filing in order to survive.
- The buffet was extravagant, and the drinks seemed to come from an endless source. The women paraded in gowns ornamented with furs and jewels, and the men smoked *coveted* Cuban cigars.



Any questions?