

Intermediate Reading

Reading For Pleasure

Session 2

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Part 1: Reading for Pleasure & Extensive Reading.

The more you read, the better you read. In Part 1, you will have an opportunity to develop the habit of reading extensively—that is, reading many books that you choose for yourself. This will help improve your reading fluency, increase your comprehension and expand your vocabulary.

Part 2: Vocabulary Building.

Research has shown that a strong vocabulary is an essential aspect of reading ability. In this part, you will develop strategies for expanding your knowledge of vocabulary, particularly words used often in academic texts.

Part 3: Comprehension Skills.

Reading is a complex activity that involves a wide variety of skills. Your ability to understand and remember what you read depends in large part on your ability to apply these skills to your reading. Each unit in Part 3 focuses on an essential reading skill for you to explore and practice. In the Focus on Vocabulary section at the end of each skills unit, you will also have the opportunity to learn some of the academic words from the unit.

Part 4: Reading Faster.

Reading rate (speed) is a crucial factor in academic performance, but one that is often overlooked. Reading faster allows you to save time on reading assignments. It also makes reading more enjoyable so you are likely to read more, and it leads to better comprehension. In this part of the book, you will work on improving your reading rate.

Reading For Pleasure

Reading for pleasure is not the same as studying. You don't have to remember everything. Good readers read a lot of stories and books. They read for pleasure, not only for school or work. This part of the book is for pleasure reading. You are going to read and talk about many stories. You can learn to be a good reader in English. Sometimes stories have a lot of new words. Do you have to know all the words? No! The first step you need to find a good book.

How to Choose a Book

1. Choose a book that interests *you*. Your teacher and classmates may have good suggestions, but choose the book that is best for you, not for them.
2. Choose a full-length book, not a collection of articles or stories. Reading a whole book by a single author allows you to become comfortable with the writer's style and vocabulary.
3. Avoid a book whose story you are already familiar with because you have read it in another language or have seen the movie made from it. Knowing what will happen may make it less interesting for you.
4. Evaluate the book. To find out about the author and the genre (type of book), read the front and back covers. Read the first few pages, to find out about the style and subject.
5. Check the level of difficulty. If a book is too easy, it may be boring; if it is too difficult, you may become discouraged and stop reading. To find out how difficult the book is for you, count the number of unknown key words on a typical page. (A key word is a word you must know in order to follow the general meaning.) Five unknown key words on one page means the book is difficult for you. No unknown key words means the book is easy.

Is Reading English Hard?

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How to Improve English Reading with 8 Easy Steps

1. Always Make Special Time to Read

Reading for fun can be done anywhere. You could take a fun book out on a bus, in bed or at the office, and you can enjoy it.

However, if you're reading to improve your comprehension, you need to **focus** and **study**.

This means you need to make a special time for this reading. Making time for your reading will let you focus well without risk of being interrupted. This time should be quiet, and you should avoid being distracted.

You should try to spend at least 30 minutes every day on focused reading. That's how to improve your reading skills seriously and successfully. The more you read, the more you'll improve.

Try this:

Turn your reading process into a **ritual**, something you repeat every time you sit down to focus on reading English.

Follow these steps, or any other steps that you'd like to make a part of your reading process:

- Find a quiet, comfortable spot with bright lighting to sit.
- Get everything you might need ready before you sit down. For example, you might want to have a pen, your notebook, a dictionary and something to drink.

- Decide how long you will read. (30 minutes is a good minimum amount of time.)
- Put all your electronics on silent mode (or turn them off) and put them away.

Turning off the sound on your electronics might not seem important, but it's something you really must do!

If you have a specific process for preparing to read, then your brain will know when you're about to read and you'll be more focused before you even start.

2. Read the Right Books

If you dislike science fiction, you might not want to read [a book about a man stuck on Mars](#). When you're choosing books (and other texts) to read, keep two things in mind:

1. What you're interested in
2. Your reading level

Whenever you can, you should read things that you enjoy. You should also choose books that are at an English level just above the one you're most comfortable with. You want to challenge yourself just enough to learn new things, but not enough to get frustrated with your reading.

Try this:

Not sure where to start? There are lots of places online where you can find recommendations for books to learn English reading:

- [Listopia](#) on Goodreads is full of lists created by people just like you.
- [Your Next Read](#) lets you search for books that are similar to the ones you've read and liked before, or you can browse some of their lists.
- [Jellybooks](#) helps you discover new books and sample 10%, which means you can try the book and see if it's a good fit for you.

- [Whichbook](#) is a very different kind of website—you choose the kinds of things you're looking for in a book (happy/sad, beautiful/disgusting) and the website gives you suggestions based on that.

Any of these can help you find the perfect book for improving your reading comprehension.

3. Ask Yourself Questions While Reading and After Reading

Learning how to read English books is about more than just reading the words!

There are a few things you can do before, during and after reading to help you better understand the text.

Before you read, **browse** the text. That means you should look over the text quickly without actually reading every word.

Take some time after you read too, to browse again and **summarize** what you remember. Try to quickly say or write a few sentences that describe what the text was about.

Thinking about what you read will show you how much of it you really understood, and help you figure out if you still have questions.

Try this:

Before you read, here are a few questions you can ask yourself as you browse, to help you prepare for reading:

- Are there any words in **bold** or *italics*?
- Are there titles or subtitles?
- What are some of the names mentioned?
- Is there a lot of dialogue?
- Are the paragraphs short or long?

After you read, the questions below can be used to help you think about what you did and did not understand:

- What was the text about?
- What are the most important things that happened in the text?

- Did anything confuse you?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Are there any parts you didn't understand?

You might have some more questions depending on what kind of text you were reading, but these are good basic ones to start with.

4. Improve Fluency First

Reading. Is. Fun.

Do you notice how you stopped every time you saw the period?

Now imagine reading an entire article or even book like this, stopping after every word. It would be difficult to understand, wouldn't it?

It's hard to form an understanding of what you're reading when you read word-by-word instead of in full sentences. That's why, to improve your understanding, it's important to improve your **fluency** first.

Fluency is how smoothly you can read. When you read in your head, you should have a certain rhythm to the words. The words should flow together naturally, like when somebody is talking. That's how to read English books like a native speaker would.

Improving fluency can be as simple as choosing slightly easier texts to read, or it might take some time and practice. If you take some time to improve how fluently you read, though, it will help you in the future. You'll improve your reading and even your speaking. It will also make reading feel more fun and natural.

Try this:

Many of the words you find when you're reading are actually "sight words." These are words that you should know by sight and should not have to think about how to read them.

You can practice sight words very quickly. Just find a good list of sight words, like [this one](#), and take about a minute or two every day to read the words as fast as you can.

If you don't know any of the words it's a good idea to look them up beforehand, but remember that this exercise is about reading faster, not understanding more. Once you can read at a comfortable speed, you can focus on understanding.

It might seem strange, but another great way to practice reading fluency is with **videos**. Specifically, look for English videos with subtitles. That way, you will read the words while hearing how a native speaker naturally says them.

5. Once You've Learned to Speed Up, Slow Down!

After you learn English reading more fluently, you can stop worrying about your speed and start thinking about the text and its meaning.

That's right, now that you can read fast, it's time to read slowly. Take time to really get into the text you're reading, instead of speeding through it.

Try this:

One great way to slow yourself down is to **read out loud**. Not only will you be practicing your reading and understanding, but also your pronunciation, listening and speaking. Focus on speaking every word carefully and pronouncing it well.

If you can't (or don't want to) read out loud, you can try pausing every few paragraphs to make sure you're paying attention.

Another way to pace yourself well is by making notes and writing down questions as you read.

6. Ask Lots of Questions

Speaking of questions—ask them. Ask a lot of them! The more you question what you read, the deeper you get into the meaning.

Asking questions is also a good way to make sure you understand what you're reading. Asking questions like "what's happening now?" or "who's speaking here?" can help keep you focused. Asking questions like "why did he do that?" or "what is she thinking?" can help you think deeper into the story.

Try this:

Keep some Post-it notes and a pen nearby. Write down any questions that come to mind as you're reading on the Post-it notes. Stick them in the text.

When you finish reading, go back and see how many of the questions you can answer now. If there are any questions you still don't know the answer to, re-read that part of the text and try to find the answer.

7. Read It Again

The poet Ezra Pound says that with books, "no reader ever read anything the first time he saw it."

Sometimes reading a text just once isn't enough to understand it. This is true if you're reading something difficult, or even if you're not—reading something more than once can help you understand it much better.

Re-reading is great for those times when you read the words but can't get them to make sense. It's also great for finding things you might have missed

the first time. If there are any new words in the text, you'll see them again every time you read again, helping you remember them.

In short, reading things again is great!

Try this:

Choose something short to read, no more than a few paragraphs. This can be a story or a news article, anything you want—as long as it takes you only about five minutes to read.

Read the article at your own pace, then write down everything you can remember from the article. Write every little detail, even write down parts of sentences if you remember them.

Now do it again.

Read the article again. Write down everything you can remember again.

Do you see how much more you remember the second time around?

Every time you read something, you understand more of it. When you want to get the most out of your reading, try reading three or more times. The first time, focus on understanding the words.

The second time, focus on the meaning. The third time, you can start asking deeper questions like “what is the author really trying to say?” or “how does this news affect the rest of the world?”

8. Read Many Kinds of Texts

Today we don't just read books and newspapers. We read blogs, emails, Tweets and texts. The more you read *anything* in English, the better you'll get at the language.

Don't just read books and news. Read anything and everything! Find a [magazine](#) that you enjoy, follow some interesting people or websites on [Facebook](#), or visit a blog you like reading.

[Magazine Line](#) is a good place to go to find digital or print magazines on just about any subject. They give you lower prices on magazine subscriptions, and you may be able to save even more if you're a student (check the "Student and Educator Rates" section for details).

Try this:

If you're having trouble discovering new things to read, try any of these **aggregators**—websites that take news and interesting articles and put them together for you to look through:

- [Mix](#) helps you find new websites based on your interests.
- [Digg](#) collects interesting stories from around the Internet onto one page.
- [Reddit](#) seems a bit less friendly, but it's a collection of websites and images that Reddit users submit for others to enjoy.

Whatever you read, just remember: The more you practice, the better you'll get.

Source: <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/english/how-to-improve-english-reading/>

EXTENSIVE READING

What is extensive reading?

- Reading **a lot, at** least one book every two or three weeks;
- Choosing a book that is interesting to you;
- No tests on comprehension or vocabulary;
- Reading at your own pace.

You will benefit most from extensive reading if you follow these three essential rules:

Rule 1: Enjoy!

Rule 2: Enjoy!

Rule 3: Enjoy!

(Source: "Rules" adapted from J. Bamford and R. Day, *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004,p.5)

Hints For Success In Extensive Reading

- Set a goal for yourself. Decide how many books you would like to read during the semester.
- Make reading a part of your daily routine. Set a time and place for reading. Read for at least thirty minutes at a time so that you can become involved in your book.
- Carry your book wherever you go and read it whenever you have time.
- Keep a journal. Write about your reactions to the book or any thoughts that are stimulated by your reading.
- When you finish a book, complete a Book Response Form to share your thoughts and reactions to it.

Reading For Study

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You already use a range of reading styles in everyday situations. The normal reading style that you might use for reading a novel is to read in detail, focusing on every word in sequence from start to finish. If it is a magazine you are reading, you might flick through the pages to see which articles are of interest. When you look in a telephone directory for a particular name, you purposefully ignore all other entries and focus your attention on spotting the name you want. These everyday reading skills can be applied to your studies.

To improve your reading skills you need to:

- Have clear reading goals;

- Choose the right texts;
- Use the right reading style;
- Use note taking techniques.

Reading goals

Clear reading goals can significantly increase your reading efficiency. Not everything in print will be of use to you. Use reading goals to select and prioritise information according to the task in hand.

Reading goals can be:

- an essay or seminar subject;
- a report brief;
- a selected subject area;
- a series of questions about a specific topic.

Use your reading goals to help you identify the information that is relevant to your current task.

Choosing a text

You will need to assess the text to see if it contains information that is relevant to your reading goals.

- Check the date of publication. Is the information up-to-date?
- Read the publisher's blurb at the back or inside sleeve for an overview of the content.
- Check the contents page for relevant chapters.
- Look up references for your topic in the index.

If the text does not seem relevant, discard it.

Once you have selected a text you can use the following techniques of scanning and skimming to help you identify areas for detailed reading.

Source: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/study/reading>

Book Lists

Fiction

Things Fall Apart. Achebe, Chinua. A classic African novel about how a Nigerian faces conflict within his society, as well as the effects of British colonialism. (215 pages)

Little Women. Alcott, Louisa May.* The classic novel of the joys and sorrows of the four March sisters and their mother in New England in the 1800s. (561 pages)

Sacajawea. Bruchac, Joseph. A novel about a young Native American woman in the early nineteenth century who helped two explorers find a safe route across North America to the Pacific Ocean. (199 pages)

*My Antonia.*** Cather, Willa.* A young woman who is the daughter of an immigrant from Bohemia faces loneliness and other challenges as an early settler in the American West. (175 pages)

Disgrace. Coetzee, J. M.* A brilliant tale of loneliness and violence in post-apartheid South Africa. (220 pages)

The Chocolate War. Cormier, Robert.* A high school student fights against a secret society of other students and becomes a hero in the school. (191 pages)

Bridget Jones's Diary. Fielding, Helen.* A funny and realistic novel (in the form of a diary) of the life of a single young woman today in search of self improvement. (267 pages)

Tender Is the Night. Fitzgerald, F. Scott.* Set in the 1920s on the French Riviera, this is the story of a psychiatrist and his wealthy wife, who is also his patient. (315 pages)

*Johnny Tremaine.*** Forbes, Esther. The American Revolution and life in Boston in the 1770s, as seen through the experiences of a youth. (269 pages)

A Lesson Before Dying. Gaines, Ernest J. The moving story of an unusual friendship between a young teacher and a man in prison for murder, waiting to be executed. (256 pages)

Mystery and Suspense

The Da Vinci Code. Brown, Dan.* A murder in a museum and a mysterious symbol lead Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu on a hunt to find a secret before it is lost forever. (467 pages)

And Then There Were None. Christie, Agatha.* Ten weekend guests who don't know one another meet on a private island. All they have in common is a secret, evil past. One by one, they die. (275 pages)

Whiteout. Follett, Ken.* Samples of a deadly virus are missing, and scientists meet at a lonely cottage during a fierce snowstorm to find a cure amid jealousy, distrust, and attractions. (474 pages)

*A is for Alibi.*** Grafton, Sue.* After serving a jail sentence for a crime she didn't commit, Nikki hires Kinsey Mulhoney to find out who was really her husband's killer. (214 pages)

The Tenth Man. Greene, Graham.* During World War II, men held prisoner by the Germans are told that three of them must die. One man trades his wealth for his life and then has to pay. (149 pages)

The Broker. Grisham, John.* A master of finance knows too many secrets. Released from prison by the American president, he flees to Europe and begins a new life in order to stay alive. (357 pages)

Night Shift. King, Stephen.* Twenty short stories guaranteed to scare the reader: Hidden rats in deep lower cellars, a beautiful girl hanging by a thread above a hellish fate. (326 pages)

The Night Manager. Le Cane, John.* After the end of the cold war, spy Jonathon Pine is enlisted to help bring down Roper, a notorious kingpin in the world of arms smuggling and drug dealing. (474 pages)

Tunnel Vision. Paretsky, Sara.* Chicago private detective V. I. Warshawsky finds a prominent attorney's wife dead in her office while a homeless family disappears. She finds that these events are connected. (470 pages)

The Rottweiler. Rendell, Ruth.* The killer is called "The Rottweiler" because he bites his victims when he murders them. A victim's belongings are found in an antiques shop and everyone who knew her is a suspect. (339 pages)

*The Sky Is Falling.*** Sheldon, Sidney.* This thriller is about the mysterious death of Gary Winthrop, the last of five people in his family to die in a single year. (398 pages)

Nonfiction

Nonfiction books are factual. Books about history, biography, and science are examples of nonfiction. Reading nonfiction can help develop your vocabulary and knowledge in a specialized area.

Biography and Autobiography

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. Angelou, Maya. A prize-winning American poet writes about her childhood experiences and how she survived violence and racism. (246 pages)

*Go Ask Alice.*** Anonymous. The true story in diary form of how a fifteen-year-old girl became addicted to drugs. (188 pages)

Growing Up. Baker, Russell. The memoir of a journalist and humorist growing up in America during the Depression and World War II. (278 pages)

*J. R. R. Tolkien: The Man Who Created the Lord of the Rings.*** Coren, Michael. Tolkien's life experiences as an orphan, a scholar, a soldier, and a professor and how they helped him to create his famous trilogy. (125 pages)

*Boy.*** Dahl, Roald. The funny and sometimes shocking childhood and school experiences of this famous writer of children's books. (160 pages)

An American Childhood. Dillard, Annie.* The author's childhood in 1950s Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, described in fond detail. (255 pages)

Out of Africa. Dinesen, Isak. The author's experiences from 1914 to 1931 running a coffee plantation in Kenya, first with her husband and later alone. (288 pages)

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down. Fadinan, Ann. A Hmong family settles in California and comes into conflict with American doctors. (300 pages)

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl. ** Frank, Anne. The diary kept by a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl hidden in an apartment with her family for two years in Amsterdam, Holland, during World War II. (308 pages)

Homesick. ** Fritz, Jean. The author's childhood in China and the dramatic escape of her family at the time of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. (140 pages)

Seabiscuit: An American Legend. Hillenbrand, Laura. The story of a racehorse named Seabiscuit who became a winner, and the people who believed in him. (377 pages)

Mountains Beyond Mountains. Kidder, Tracy.* The inspiring life and work of Dr. Paul Farmer, who has dedicated himself to the idea that "the only real nation is humanity." (304 pages)

Into the Wild. Krakauer, Jon.* How and why a young man walked into the Alaskan wilderness alone and died there. (207 pages)

The Autobiography of Malcolm X. Malcolm X with Alex Haley. The dramatic life story of an important figure in African-American history, as told by Malcolm X himself. (350 pages)

Long Walk to Freedom. Mandela, Nelson. Mandela's life story, written while he was in a South African prison. (544 pages)

Rosa Parks: My Story. Parks, Rosa, with Jim Haskins. A key figure in the civil rights movement tells how she refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus. (188 pages)

J. K. Rowling: The Wizard Behind Harry Potter. ** Shapiro, Marc. This is the life story of one of the most successful writers of our time. (163 pages)

Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman. Shostak, Marjorie. The remarkable story of an African woman and her people in the Kalahari Desert, as told by an anthropologist. (402 pages)

Almost Lost. Sparks, Beatrice.* The true story of an anonymous teenager's life on the streets of a big city. (239 pages)

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