Reading Techniques

Revised Edition

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Clare West
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Introduction

Reading in a foreign or second or third language is much more difficult than reading in your mother tongue. It doesn't come naturally and needs a lot of practice. In addition, there are a number of skills and strategies which we use when reading in our first language, without being aware of them. This book identifies and demonstrates these practical skills, and then shows how they can be used in various types of reading tasks. Using the appropriate reading techniques helps people to become much more effective readers, and to tackle examination papers with greater confidence.

Who is this book for?

Reading Techniques is for students at upper-intermediate level who wish to improve their general reading skills in English and/or work specifically towards international exams at B2 level (Common European Framework). It can be used to supplement any coursebook at this level, and is suitable for classroom use, for homework, or for self-study.

What does Reading Techniques offer?

- coverage of the main reading skills required at this level – skimming, scanning, intensive reading, reading between the lines, speed reading and identifying topic, source and register
- extensive practice in using the skills to deal with three common task types – multiple choice, gapped texts and multiple matching
- graded texts and tasks
- study boxes with clear step-by-step guidance and regular reminders of the particular skills required
- icons representing skills, to aid visual intelligence
- texts from a wide range of sources, in varying styles and registers
- four full-length practice reading tests.

How is the book organised?

It is divided into five distinct sections:

Section 1: Reading Skills

Six important reading skills are presented in this section, with graded practice tasks. There are also three practice units, each practising the skills presented in the previous two units.

Section 2: Multiple Choice

Five units give guidance and practice in dealing with this traditional but challenging task type. The focus is mainly on opinion, gist, attitude and deducing meaning, but also on detail and features of text organisation.
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Section 3: Gapped Texts
Five units deal with this more recently established task type. Here the focus is on text structure, cohesion and coherence.

Section 4: Multiple Matching
Five units cover this task type, which can be based on a wide range of texts. The focus is on specific information, details, opinion and attitude.

Section 5: Practice Tests
There are four tests, of three parts each, with full-length texts and tasks appropriate to the level and specifications of the FCE examination.

How should Reading Techniques be used?
Section 1 should be studied first, because this section describes the reading skills and how to use them. Sections 2 – 4 can be studied in any order. However, as the tasks and texts have been carefully selected and graded for level, it is important to work through each section from its first unit to its last. Section 5 should be done at the end.

Tips for the student
• Make sure you really understand Section 1 before you move on to other sections.
• Memorise the icons – they are there to help you remember which skills to use.

- skimming
- reading between the lines
- scanning
- speed reading
- intensive reading
- topic, source and register

• Use a pencil to complete the tasks the first time, in case you want to go back and try again later.
• Check your answers for each unit before you move on.
• Practise your reading on whatever you enjoy – newspapers, magazines, short stories, emails, blogs, websites and so on.

Finally . . .
If reading skills are practised often enough, they become almost instinctive, and then reading itself becomes a natural, pleasurable activity. I hope that the techniques in this book will make reading easier and therefore more enjoyable for everyone.

Clare West
You will find these terms used throughout the book. They are all connected in some way with reading skills.

- **gapped text**: a task in which you read a text with gaps in it, then choose which sentences should fit in the gaps
- **gist**: the main point(s) or general meaning of a text or part of a text
- **intensive reading**: the skill of reading carefully and thoroughly, so that you understand as much as possible about a text
- **multiple choice**: a task in which you answer questions about a text by choosing the correct answer from several options
- **multiple matching**: a task in which you scan a text or texts to find specific information to match a set of questions
- **narrator**: the person who is telling a story
- **reading between the lines**: the skill of deducing meaning from context, and gaining a deeper understanding of what the writer is implying
- **register**: the style of language suitable for a particular use (e.g. formal, informal, neutral)
- **scanning**: the skill of reading quickly in order to find some specific detailed information
- **skimming**: the skill of reading quickly in order to find out what the main points of a text are
- **source**: where a text comes from (e.g. newspaper, novel, diary)
- **speed reading**: the skill of reading quickly while finding out the gist of a text
- **topic**: the subject of a text (e.g. shopping, money, travel)