



Unit
1

Skimming



If you want to know roughly what a text is about, you read it through quickly – this is **skimming**. You let your eye run over it, rather like throwing a flat stone onto a lake, so that it just skims the surface. Then you should have **the gist** – that is, the general meaning without any of the details.

- A** Look quickly at this short text and say briefly what it is about, in your own words, in one sentence. Do not read every word. Use the guidance to help you.

I usually went by bus, but sometimes if I wanted to save my bus fare for some project or other, I walked instead. Of course, this took much longer, but I followed the bus route, all the way down Dyke Road to the shops at the roundabout, and then heading down Montpelier Road towards the sea, past the townhouses with their neat window boxes, St Michael's church with its tall spire, and the solid, well-built Lloyds Bank building on the corner, until I reached the school.

GUIDANCE

What tense should you use?

- B** Do the same with this text.

It seems that most of us want more holidays than we actually get, apart from a small number of workaholics who do not take all the days off they are entitled to. It is important, however, according to the experts, to make sure that you use your time off sensibly, to relax and unwind from the pressures of the daily routine. Some holidays can be more exhausting than work, so it is crucial to plan the kind of holiday that is appropriate for your personal needs.

GUIDANCE

- 1 What is the topic, in one word?
- 2 What advice is being given?
- 3 What does 'crucial' mean?

C Write one sentence giving the gist of this text.

The old woman looked at the pale faces under the umbrellas and sniffed scornfully. In her day, they hadn't worried about the hole in the ozone layer. Well, there probably hadn't been one then. She remembered slapping coconut oil on and lying on the beach, sizzling almost, in the baking sun. Now it was barrier cream, Factor 30, and sunhats all the time. 'And we used to eat whatever we fancied, too,' she thought. 'It never did us any harm.' Things weren't what they used to be.

GUIDANCE

What are the two times or periods mentioned?

D Do the same with this text.

The expansion of tourist development in Spain has brought about a decline in long-established agricultural methods. Young people are no longer prepared to tend the olives and the vines, when higher wages are being offered by the construction and service industries.

GUIDANCE

- 1 Can you think of an adjective that describes a long-established custom, beginning with **t**?
- 2 Which tenses are used in this text?
- 3 Ask yourself – What is happening? Where? Why?

E Do the same with this text.

A shortage of rainfall in parts of Europe has meant restrictions on water consumption for many residents and, consequently, greater interest in the conservation of what is, after all, one of our most valuable resources. Water companies are investing considerable amounts in the maintenance and improvement of their reservoirs and pipework, and many individual consumers now collect rainwater for their gardens in water butts and tanks.

GUIDANCE

- 1 Don't worry about vocabulary details like 'reservoirs' and 'butts'.
- 2 Find another word or expression for 'shortage of rainfall'.
- 3 Ask yourself – What has happened? Where? Why? What is the result?

Reading Skills

F Write one sentence giving the gist of this text.

A CITY ON THE MOVE

Every year, air pollution in the capital is at its worst during holiday weekends – especially in July, when most people leave by car for their holiday destination, and at the end of August, when they return. To combat this, new transport measures are being introduced by the authorities, including the building of a new tram line for the south of the city, a ban on Sunday traffic in several streets, and an ambitious plan for 56 km of cycle tracks and new pedestrian zones.

There has even been a proposal, supported by the mayor, that public transport should be free on days when pollution reaches a dangerous level; ozone readings would be taken and public announcements would be made on radio and television, to let people know. Not only are the authorities trying to prevent the chaos caused by public transport strikes in the past, they also want to be able to guarantee safe air for everyone.

GUIDANCE

- 1 What do 'combat', 'measures' and 'guarantee' mean?
- 2 When is this problem 'at its worst'?
- 3 Is this text mainly about public transport, or air pollution? Look at the beginning and end of the text.

G Write one sentence giving the gist of this text.

SPEED CAMERAS

More and more speed cameras are being installed on Britain's roads in order to bring down the number of serious accidents and make motorists aware of the dangers of driving too fast. The police, who are backing this move, are in favour of making the cameras highly visible – many of them are placed in bright yellow boxes, so that drivers can see them from a distance and slow down.

However, recent research in New Zealand appears to run counter to these initiatives. Officials at the Land Transport Safety Authority in Wellington discovered that hidden cameras were actually more effective than visible ones in reducing driving speeds on all roads. Although drivers were not able to see the cameras, warning signs indicated the start of the speed camera zone, and it seems likely that motorists drove more cautiously overall because they did not know the exact location of the cameras. Overt cameras, on the other hand, had only a localised effect, by reducing actual accidents on the few metres of road covered by the camera.

GUIDANCE

- 1 What does the research show?
- 2 Which two things are being compared in the text?

H Write one sentence giving the gist of this text.

CLEAN KIDS

Some scientists think that parents make too big a fuss about hygiene, and that daily contact with bacteria and viruses can be good for youngsters. A recent study conducted by
 5 the University Children's Hospital in Munich showed that children who had at least two mild virus infections before their first birthday were only half as likely to be diagnosed with asthma or related allergies when they were
 10 seven, compared with children who had been ill only once or not at all. This finding supports the hypothesis that today's ultra-clean lifestyle is the reason for an increase in allergies in the general population in developed countries. It is possible, although this is not yet established,
 15 that contact with the bacteria in soil and water is needed for cells in human immune systems to develop correctly. So parents should not overreact if their children sometimes get muddy or dirty when playing outside. 20

GUIDANCE

- 1 What does the research show?
- 2 What is the advice to parents?

I Write one sentence giving the gist of this text. It is not necessary to list all the suggestions in the article.

A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

Many people complain of sleeping badly at night. There is no single reliable cure for insomnia, but instead of just taking sleeping pills, sufferers should attempt to find the root cause of the
 5 problem and tackle that. Let's look at some of the most common causes of insomnia. Worrying about some aspect of your life or work can often prevent you from sleeping. Try to calm your anxieties before you
 10 go to bed, and if you wake up with something on your mind, get up and sort it out if you can. Another frequent problem is overexcitement of the nervous system. All substances containing caffeine can induce sleeplessness, so try to
 avoid alcohol, coffee, tea, etc. too near bedtime. 15 Parties and other late-night activities can also overstimulate and cause insomnia. Finally, a few tips to make sure you are as comfortable as possible. Check that your bed
 20 does not need replacing; you'll probably need to buy a new one every ten years or so. Keep the bedroom temperature cool: heat will prevent you from sleeping. Read for a while if you find that helpful. Above all, try to maintain a happy
 25 frame of mind – if you dread going to bed, you'll find it more difficult to get to sleep. If you bear all these points in mind, I'm sure you'll achieve a healthy, normal sleep pattern in time.

GUIDANCE

- 1 What is the problem?
- 2 What is the main aim of the article?