

B2 READING

# › **TEACHER GUIDE**

# The purpose of the Teacher Guide

This guide is for teachers preparing learners for the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools B2 Reading test. It offers valuable insights, strategies and practical tips to help learners strengthen their reading skills, build confidence and become more effective readers. It also supports you in addressing common challenges learners may encounter and helping them enhance their existing abilities.

It features a range of practice activities drawn from the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools B2 Reading test, with follow-up tasks that can be easily tailored to your classroom needs.

**You can download free practice papers for the ESOL for Schools B2 Reading test from the LANGUAGECERT website.**

Visit: [languagecert.org](https://www.languagecert.org)



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# > The importance of developing reading skills

Many learners find reading a demanding task, especially when they are expected to extract specific information from a text quickly and accurately. Several factors can make reading more challenging, including complex or unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar text formats, lengthy passages, and questions that require learners to understand the writer's style, intention or attitude. As a result, preparing learners for reading assessments can be a difficult process, making it essential to start building the necessary skills early on.

During the test, learners have to read under strict time limits, which can increase stress and make it harder to concentrate. The pressure to perform well, avoid mistakes and complete the test on time can distract from truly understanding and engaging with the material. Teachers play a crucial role in supporting learners through this process by selecting texts that match their language ability, introducing important vocabulary in advance, and teaching effective reading strategies. By creating a positive and supportive learning environment, teachers can help learners gain the confidence to take risks, learn from their errors, and steadily improve their reading skills.



# The challenges of reading in a second language

Reading in a second language can be difficult because it requires the brain to work in unfamiliar ways. Instead of effortlessly understanding the text, learners must pay close attention to meaning, structure and flow. This increased mental effort can make reading feel slow and tiring. Even when the topic is interesting, readers might struggle to fully grasp the message, which can lead to confusion or frustration.

The unfamiliar sounds, patterns and logic of a new language can also make it hard to stay focused. As a result, reading becomes not just a skill to develop, but a challenge that demands patience, persistence and support.

## KEY CHALLENGES OF READING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE



### Limited vocabulary

When learners read in a second language, one of the biggest obstacles is a limited vocabulary. They often encounter words they don't understand, which can make even simple texts feel confusing or frustrating. Unlike native speakers, who can usually guess meanings from context, second-language learners may not have enough exposure to the language to do this easily. This can lead to constant pauses in reading, the need to look up words frequently, and ultimately a disruption in comprehension and flow.

### Lack of background knowledge

Reading comprehension is not just about understanding words – it's also about understanding ideas and context. Many texts assume a shared cultural or historical background, which second-language learners might not have. For instance, references to historical events, pop culture or societal norms may be clear to native readers but confusing to others. Without this background knowledge, learners may struggle to understand the full meaning of a passage, even if they know the vocabulary.



### Difficulty with grammar and sentence structure

Grammar rules vary widely between languages. When learners encounter unfamiliar sentence structures or complex grammar, it becomes harder to figure out what a sentence actually means. For example, passive voice, conditional forms or inverted word orders can be especially difficult. If the learner's native language uses a different grammatical structure, this can add another layer of challenge and make reading slow and mentally taxing.



### Translation habits

Many learners try to translate every word or sentence into their native language as they read. While this can sometimes help, it usually slows down reading and can lead to misunderstandings. Languages often have different ways of expressing ideas, so direct translation doesn't always work. Instead of understanding the overall meaning, learners get stuck on individual words, making reading a slow and disjointed process.



## Reading fluency

Fluency means being able to read quickly and smoothly with good comprehension. Second-language readers often lack this fluency. They may read slowly, pause often and struggle to connect ideas across a text. This not only affects their understanding but also reduces enjoyment and motivation. Without fluency, reading can feel like a chore instead of a way to learn or relax.



## Motivation and confidence

Reading in a second language can feel overwhelming, especially if learners face frequent difficulties. This can lead to a loss of motivation, as they may begin to believe that they're not good at the language. Lack of confidence can become a barrier itself – if learners expect to struggle, they might avoid reading altogether, which then slows their progress.



## Idiomatic and figurative language

Idioms, slang, metaphors and other figurative expressions can be especially difficult. These phrases often can't be understood by translating them literally. For example, a phrase like "hit the road" might confuse someone who thinks it means physically hitting a road, when in fact it means to set off on a journey. Such expressions are deeply tied to culture and require familiarity with how the language is used in real-life contexts, which can be especially challenging for high school learners still building their language experience.



## Pronunciation and internal speech

Even during silent reading, people often "hear" the words in their heads. For second-language learners, uncertainty about how words are pronounced can interrupt this internal voice, making reading feel unnatural or jarring. This can also interfere with comprehension, especially when learners are unsure if they're recognising the word correctly or mixing it up with another similar-looking word.



# Global reading skills at B2 level

At B2 level, learners are able to:



understand articles and reports on current issues in which the writer takes a particular stance or viewpoint



understand contemporary literary prose



adapt their style and speed of reading to suit different texts and purposes, using appropriate reference sources selectively

## B2 Proficiency Scales

The B2 Proficiency Scales outline the reading skills learners should be able to demonstrate at B2 level, as defined by the CEFR.

At B2 level, learners can:

- **generally understand emails, letters and articles** that relate to familiar topics or personal interests.
- **handle more technical or subject-specific texts**, even outside their main areas of interest, particularly if they are allowed to use tools like a bilingual dictionary or a glossary.
- **switch between reading styles** - such as scanning for specific information, skimming for the main idea, or reading in detail – depending on the purpose.
- **read news items, articles and reports**, and determine whether they are relevant to their needs or interests.
- **understand texts that explore current social or global issues**, including those where the writer expresses a strong opinion or argument.





# Getting to know the ESOL for Schools B2 Reading test

The ESOL for Schools test assesses all four skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) across two components – Written and Spoken. The Reading, Writing and Listening tests are part of the Written component.



The Reading test consists of four parts.



The overall duration of the Reading and Writing test is 2 hours and 10 minutes.



There is no break between the Reading and Writing tests.





## KEY FEATURES OF THE TEST

The table below summarises the key features of the test (skill assessed / focus, tasks presented, format of each part, marks awarded).

PART	SKILL & FOCUS	TASK	FORMAT	RAW MARKS
1	Understand in detail information, ideas and opinions	Answer questions about a long text, e.g. a news story, article, review or proposal	Six three-option multiple-choice questions about the text	6
2	Understand how meaning is built up in a text	Complete a text with six sentences removed	A choice of seven sentences to complete six gaps in a text	6
3	Understand the purpose of a text, be able to locate specific information in the text, and be aware of the writer's stance and attitude	Answer questions about four texts with a linked theme but a different purpose	Seven multiple matching questions to identify information from the texts	7
4	Understand specific information through detailed reading	Answer questions about a continuous text, e.g. narrative, descriptive, explanatory, expository, biographical or instructive	Seven open-ended "Wh-" questions requiring short answers (maximum five words)	7

## HOW THE TEST IS MARKED

- › Test takers are awarded one mark per correct response for all parts of the Reading test.
- › The maximum score for all four parts is 26 marks.
- › Marks are then converted to a scaled score from 0–50.
- › There is no minimum score for the Reading test. However, in order to be successful, test takers need to attain at least 50% in the Written component, which consists of the Reading test, as well as the Listening and Writing tests.



# Helping learners prepare for the ESOL for Schools B2 Reading test

Familiarising learners with the format and content of the test, as well as providing targeted practice, can significantly enhance their performance on Test Day.

In this section, you will find ideas for preparing learners for each of the four parts of the test, followed by clear, easy-to-use classroom activities drawn from B2 Reading practice papers. These activities are designed to introduce learners to the test format and provide authentic practice. Additional activities are also included to reinforce learning for each section of the test and offer opportunities for further practice.

## HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR READING PART 1: MULTIPLE CHOICE

**Learners will be given a continuous text followed by six questions. They choose the correct answer for each one.**

- › To practise for this part, provide learners with similar texts to those in the task (e.g. news stories, articles, reviews, proposals) and set them multiple-choice questions about the texts (e.g. about purpose, gist, key information, ideas/opinions).
- › Tell learners to pay attention to the title of the text as this will give them a clue as to what it is about.
- › Advise learners to read the whole text first to gain a good understanding of it, before attempting to answer the questions.
- › Remind learners that the correct answers will not usually be worded exactly as they appear in the text, so they may need to identify paraphrases of those words.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.



## CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE READING PART 1



### Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Reading test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 1 of the Reading test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

#### Reading Part 1

Read the text and the questions. Choose the correct answer for each question.

##### March of the Penguins - film review

It's not hard to see why *March of the Penguins* has been a surprise box office smash - after all, who doesn't love to look at penguins? However, the film-makers miss several opportunities to make this something really special.

Directed by Frenchman Luc Jacquet and narrated (in the US version) by Morgan Freeman, the film took over a year to make and was filmed in extremely harsh conditions in Antarctica. It was then edited down from over 120 hours of footage to a viewer-friendly 85 minutes. It charts the annual cycle of the emperor penguins of Antarctica, beginning with their 70-mile march from the sea to their mating grounds (the bleak, uninhabited area where their lives began). They walk in single file, enduring winds of up to 100 mph and sub-zero temperatures. When they finally reach the mating grounds they undergo a series of elaborate rituals before mating.

Once the egg is laid, the female penguins go back to the sea where they swim around, eating and having a great time, whilst the males are left to hatch the eggs. After two months, the eggs hatch and the females return with food, at which point the males begin a constant trek to the sea and back in order to gather enough food to keep the penguin chicks in the style to which they've become accustomed.

The savage beauty of the Antarctic, as well as the details of the penguins' feathers, are all captured by the fantastic photography. The main problem is the constant human-centred approach to the narration, and Morgan Freeman is never given the chance to miss jerking tears: 'This is the first time the father has broken his bond with the chick. It is not an easy thing to do.' Really? How do we know? Did Jacquet interview the daddy penguins? In truth, the images are striking enough on their own.

Secondly, it's been horribly sanitised, with all the real bits, notably death and the mating process, removed to make it safely suitable for young children. Freeman also glosses over the deaths of tired penguins who can't endure the journey: they don't die; they 'disappear' or 'fade away'.

In short, *March of the Penguins* is undeniably spectacular to look at, but it doesn't amount to much more than 85 minutes of 'Ooh, look at the cute penguins'. Kids will love it and it's still worth watching it yourself for the astonishing imagery.

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1. At the beginning of the cycle, the penguins
  - a) travel along the coast.
  - b) go to their birthplace.
  - c) search for a new home.
2. After the females lay their eggs, they
  - a) keep them warm.
  - b) go back to their home.
  - c) return to the sea to feed.
3. After the chicks are born, the males
  - a) take them to the sea to feed them.
  - b) spend two months in the sea.
  - c) bring food to them from the sea.
4. The film suffers from
  - a) a poor choice of narrator.
  - b) an over-emotional script.
  - c) insufficient visual material.
5. In order to appeal to children, the film-makers have
  - a) cut the less pleasant images.
  - b) changed the story of the film.
  - c) reduced the length of the film.
6. In a nutshell, the reviewer's opinion is that the film is
  - a) worth seeing despite the narration.
  - b) visually stunning and well-narrated.
  - c) fine for kids but adults will hate it.

Sample taken from B2 Reading Part 1 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › How many texts are there in Part 1? (answer: one (long) text)
- › How many questions does Part 1 have? (answer: six questions)
- › What kind of questions are they? (answer: multiple-choice questions)
- › How many multiple-choice options are there for each question? (answer: three options)

## TEST ACTIVITY

This activity draws on learners' prior knowledge, develops their prediction skills and ability to read for specific information, and provides practice for the Part 1 task.

### Step 1

To engage learners with the topic, ask the class if they know what a film review is and what its purpose is. (*example answer: a text written by critics about the overall quality of a film, which also recommends whether it is worth watching*)

### Step 2

Tell the class they are going to read a review about a film called "March of the Penguins". Ask them to predict what sort of information the review will include (e.g. information about the director, where the film was shot). Elicit learners' ideas but do not provide any answers.

### Step 3

Put learners in pairs and give each pair a copy of the task. Ask them to read the text carefully to identify which of their predictions in Step 2 were correct.

### Step 4

Ask pairs to re-read the text and answer the following questions:

- › Which two paragraphs tell the reader that the film has got both strengths and weaknesses? (*answer: the first and last paragraphs*)
- › Which paragraph mentions the narrator's overemotional reaction? (*answer: the fourth paragraph*)
- › Which paragraph refers to scenes that were shot but which were finally deleted? (*answer: the fifth paragraph*)
- › Which paragraph briefly describes the penguins' long and exhausting journey? (*answer: the second paragraph*)
- › Which paragraph shares information about the typical roles of the male and female penguin? (*answer: the third paragraph*)

### Step 5

Elicit the answers to the questions in Step 4 as part of a whole-class discussion before providing the correct answers.

### Step 6

Finally, tell pairs to do the task. Have them share their answers with the class as part of a whole-class discussion before you provide the correct answers.

(*answers: 1 b, 2 c, 3 c, 4 b, 5 a, 6 a*)

## MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR READING PART 1 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more reading skills.

### 1 Create a “Spot the gist” task

Prepare five short paragraphs (around three to five sentences each) taken from a variety of reviews (e.g. films, books, exhibitions). For each paragraph, write a question that focuses on its main idea, along with three answer options (one correct and two plausible distractors).

Have learners work in pairs, reading each paragraph and choosing the best option to answer the question. Discuss answers as a class, focusing on the strategies learners used to complete the task (e.g. identifying the topic sentence, noticing repeated vocabulary, recognising the tone, etc.).

This activity helps learners develop their skimming skills – a key strategy for Part 1 – by reading to identify the main idea of a paragraph.

### 2 Try a matching activity

Prepare five or six short statements from a real review (or invent your own) that express someone’s opinion, e.g. “the narrator is never given the chance to miss jerking tears”; “the film-makers miss several opportunities to make this something really special”. Then create a second list containing paraphrases of those statements, e.g. “the way it’s written is too emotional”; “they don’t make the most of the story”. Put learners in pairs and have them match each original statement to its paraphrase. You could also ask learners to explain which words or phrases helped them choose their answers during a whole-class discussion.

This activity helps learners identify attitudes and opinions. This skill of reading between the lines can help them when answering tricky opinion-based questions.

### 3 Set a build-the-question challenge

For a more challenging exercise, have learners create their own questions. Put them into small groups and give each group a short paragraph from a review. Each group writes one multiple-choice question for their paragraph, including three answer options (one correct and two plausible distractors). Encourage them to use paraphrasing and highlight the answer in the text.

This activity helps learners better understand question formats and how distractors work.



## HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR READING PART 2: GAP-FILL

**Learners will be given a text with six gaps. They choose the correct sentence from the seven options (A–G) to complete the text. There is one sentence that isn't needed.**

- › To familiarise learners with this part, provide them with short texts, each with six missing sentences plus a distractor sentence. Learners could discuss as a class where each missing sentence belongs and why, and which is the distractor.
- › Tell learners to read the text carefully. They should look at the title and the key words/phrases/sentences either side of the gaps, which will give them clues to the correct answers.
- › To help them better understand the text, draw learners' attention to cohesive devices (e.g. "and", "but", "then", "finally", "however") and to think about their function.
- › Explain that one sentence will not be used (acting as a distractor).
- › When they have chosen all their answers, advise them to read the completed text to ensure it makes sense.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.

## CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE READING PART 2



### Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Reading test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 2 of the Reading test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

#### Reading Part 2

Read the text. Use the sentences to complete the text. Choose the correct sentence for each gap. There is one extra sentence you will not need.

#### Playing and learning

Throughout history children have played in groups and taken part in imaginative games. They've pretended to be pirates and princesses, heroes and villains. (1)\_\_\_\_\_ However, the way in which children play has changed during recent times. Children now have a much wider range of toys to choose from and as a result spend less time playing pretend games. (2)\_\_\_\_\_

Pretend games actually help children to develop an important learning skill called 'executive function', which improves their ability to self-regulate. Kids with good self-regulation are able to manage their emotions and behaviour, and display self-control and discipline.

(3)\_\_\_\_\_ In the late 1940s psychologists carried out a self-regulation study, in which young children were asked to perform a number of different exercises. One of the exercises in the experiment was to stand perfectly still without moving, which most three-year olds were good at. (4)\_\_\_\_\_ They found that today's five-year-old children could only perform at the same level as three-year-olds in the 1940s and today's seven-year-olds were only just reaching the level of a five-year-old then.

A child's level of 'executive function' can have a big effect on the success they have at school, as children learn more when they can pay attention and manage their feelings. One reason imaginative play is such a vital tool for building self-control is because it teaches children to engage in 'private speech'. (5)\_\_\_\_\_ When children's play is more structured, their private speech declines.

Children are now starting their formal lessons in school at a much younger age and classes are often geared towards testing children and preparing them for exams. (6)\_\_\_\_\_ But it now seems that this environment we've created, which was designed to give children every advantage in life, may actually have deprived them of a vital activity. Play time, it seems, is extremely important for children.

- A Parents created secure environments to play in.
- B They've improvised and regulated their play by making up their own rules and characters.
- C Researchers recently repeated this experiment, and found very different results.
- D This recent trend has been shown to have an impact on their imagination.
- E As a result some teachers think playing is a waste of time.
- F This means that children talk to themselves about what they are going to do and how they are going to do it.
- G By comparing two studies, we can now prove that children's ability to self-regulate has been reduced in the past sixty years.

Sample taken from B2 Reading Part 2 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › How many questions does Part 2 have? (*answer: six questions*)
- › What kind of questions are they? (*answer: gap-fill questions*)
- › How many sentences have been removed from the text? (*answer: six sentences*)
- › How many sentences are provided to complete the six gaps? (*answer: seven sentences, one being a distractor*)

## TEST ACTIVITY

This activity strengthens learners' ability to identify contextual clues, builds critical reading skills and provides practice for the Part 2 task.

### Step 1

Tell the class you're going to share the correct answers to the reading task with them and that they will need to identify why the answers are correct.

### Step 2

Put learners in pairs and give each pair a copy of the completed gap-fill text with the correct answers underlined. They should read the text, focusing on each underlined sentence in turn and paying close attention to the words or sentences before and after it. They then try to identify the clue(s) in the surrounding text that show(s) why that sentence is the correct answer.

### Step 3

Ask pairs to share their answers with the rest of the class as part of a whole-class discussion.

### Step 4

After eliciting learners' answers, provide the correct answers.



*(answers:*

*1 B – Clue(s): “They” and “their” refer to children in the previous sentence; “play” repeats the fact that children “have played ...” (mentioned in the previous sentence).*

*2 D – Clue(s): “has been shown” matches the tense “has changed” in the previous sentence; “their” refers to the children in the previous sentence; “trend” repeats the idea of the children acquiring a habit (mentioned in the previous sentence).*

*3 G – Clue(s): reference to a date/period of time (“In the late 1940s”) following “... in the past sixty years” in the previous sentence; none of the other options refer to a period of time or date, so are not relevant to this section.*

*4 C – Clue(s): repeated reference to “experiment” (mentioned in the previous sentence); reference to “researchers” (related to “experiment”, which is mentioned in the previous sentence); repetition of the word “found” in the removed sentence in order to provide more details about what researchers discovered.*

*5 F – Clue(s): repeated reference to “children” (mentioned in the previous sentence); sentence providing an explanation for the point raised in the previous one (i.e. what exactly children do); the following sentence (after the gap) provides more clarifications about play (mentioned before the gap); “This”, introducing the removed sentence, clarifies what was said in the previous sentence.*

*6 E – Clue(s): this paragraph is about lessons, school and testing, and the missing sentence is related to this theme as it refers to teachers; the following sentence relates to playing, and describes it as a vital activity for children which provides even more information about the issue raised.)*

**Note:** This activity may be completed over two lessons.

## MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR READING PART 2 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more reading skills.

### 1 Put the spotlight on distractors

Have learners work in pairs and give each pair a gapped text similar to the one in Part 2. Then provide them with three sentences for each gap (one correct and two distractors). Pairs work together to identify which two answers are incorrect, discussing why these sentences don't fit. Encourage them to look for clues such as mismatched referencing (e.g. verb doesn't match the subject), illogical sequences (e.g. a sentence beginning "Finally" can't precede a sentence starting with "Then"), repetition without clear links, or irrelevant ideas.

This activity helps learners recognise distractors and strengthens their ability to select the correct answer with confidence.

### 2 Lead a make-it-yourself gap-fill task

Ask learners to write one or two short paragraphs on a topic (e.g. childhood, learning, technology) and remove one key sentence. They should then write three options for the missing sentence – the correct one and two plausible distractors. Learners exchange their tasks with a partner, who must try to choose the correct answer.

This activity supports both writing and reading comprehension skills in an engaging, student-centred way.

### 3 Organise a sentence puzzle race

Put learners in small groups and give each group a short text (one or two paragraphs) with three or four sentences removed. Prepare strips of paper, each containing one of the missing sentences, and give a set to each group. Learners read the text with gaps and match the missing sentences to the correct gaps. They should underline or highlight the clues in the text – such as pronouns, time markers, synonyms – that helped them decide. To add some excitement, make this a race to see who can correctly match all the sentences first!

This activity develops learners' awareness of how sentences fit together to create a coherent and cohesive text – a key skill for Part 2 of the Reading test.

## HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR READING PART 3: MULTIPLE MATCHING

**Learners will be given four short texts (A–D) with a linked theme but different purpose. They choose a text for each of the seven questions.**

- › To familiarise learners with this part, provide them with sets of four short texts with a common theme but different purpose, similar to those they'll encounter in the task (e.g. emails, articles, adverts) and have them answer questions about the texts.
- › Before attempting the task, learners should skim-read all four texts. This will help them to establish the topic, type and purpose of each text, before reading again more carefully with the task in mind.
- › Tell learners to underline the words in the texts that provide clues to the correct answers. They could share these clues in class.
- › You could ask learners to work in pairs and then compare their answers with the rest of the class before you give the correct ones.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.



## CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE READING PART 3



### Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Reading test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 3 of the Reading test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

#### Reading Part 3

Read the four texts. Which text gives you the answer to each question? Choose the correct text (A-D) for each question.

**A**

For the perfect fries, follow these tips: cut long, thin chips, and salt them. Pour enough good quality oil in a pan and increase the heat. Test the temperature by dropping a chip in. If it starts frying, the temperature is right. Add the potatoes to the hot oil and cover the pot for five minutes, then remove the lid and fry for another five minutes on high. Take them out and add salt if needed. If you like, add some melted cheese too.

**B**

Nowadays nobody can imagine life without potatoes, but they are a fairly new addition to the European diet. Sailors returning from South America brought them back, but for at least two centuries, potatoes remained a food for few. They became popular in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, when the climate changed, and other products people relied on were hard to find. One of the most famous and well-liked dishes, is, of course, fried potatoes which are easy to make and always tasty if cooked properly.

**C**

Are you fond of potatoes? Do you enjoy well-fried chips as much as we do? Do you like your fries crispy on the outside and soft on the inside? Do you fancy different varieties of toppings and dressings with them? If you do, then, the Happy Potato Café is the place to visit! We specialise in making the perfect fries for every taste by cooking them at the appropriate temperature in high quality oil! Visit our historic, two-hundred-year-old café and taste the best fries since Belgian farmers first invented them!

**D**

Last Saturday we visited this café we'd heard so much about to try their fries. I must say they were far from delicious, so I'd not recommend it. The owners claim they make the best in the area, but obviously ours hadn't been cooked at an appropriate temperature because they were cold and soft, not at all crispy – very disappointing. There were lots of customers, though, and the owners say their café's really old – but our fries tasted as old as the first potatoes to come to Europe from America!

#### Which text:

1. aims to attract potential customers?
2. is an account of a personal experience?
3. gives instructions on how to do something?


#### Which text provides the answers to the following questions?

4. When was an eating place established?
5. What does someone advise against?
6. How can you tell when the temperature is appropriate?
7. Who introduced potatoes to Europe?


*Sample taken from B2 Reading Part 3 practice paper*

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › How many texts are there in Part 3? (answer: four texts)
- › How many questions does Part 3 have? (answer: seven questions)
- › What kind of questions are they? (answer: multiple matching questions)
- › What do the four texts have in common? (answer: they are all related to the same theme)



## TEST ACTIVITY

This activity encourages learners to analyse different text types and purposes, enhances their critical reading skills, and provides practice for the Part 3 task.

### Step 1

Put learners in pairs and give them a copy of the task. Ask them to read the four texts and try to identify what they have in common.

### Step 2

Ask pairs to share their ideas with the class as part of a whole-class discussion before you provide the correct answer. (*answer: all four texts are about fried potatoes*)

### Step 3

Tell learners that each text was written with a different purpose. Ask pairs to discuss the following:

- › Where each text might have come from (e.g. a dictionary, a manual, a review).
- › What its purpose is (e.g. to inform, to teach, to entertain).

### Step 4

Ask pairs to share their answers with the class and give reasons for their choices as part of a whole-class discussion. Then provide the correct answers.

(*answers:*

*Text A: possible source – a recipe from a cookbook; purpose – to give instructions for cooking fries*

*Text B: possible source – a magazine article; purpose – to inform the reader about the origin of the potato*

*Text C: possible source – an advert for a café; purpose – to advertise its food*

*Text D: possible source – an email or friendly letter; purpose – to inform a friend or relative about a bad experience in a café serving fried potatoes*)

### Step 5

Still in their pairs, ask learners to read the four texts again and answer the questions that follow. They can share their answers with the class before you provide the correct answers.

(*answers: 1 C, 2 D, 3 A, 4 C, 5 D, 6 A, 7 B*)

## MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR READING PART 3 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more reading skills.

### 1 Set a quick-fire scanning challenge

Give each learner a short text that is fun or silly, such as unusual facts about animals, gadgets or celebrities. Then read out a set of instructions related to the text, e.g. "Find the sentence that says when it was invented" or "Find the sentence that mentions a funny incident". For each instruction, allow learners 30 seconds to underline the sentences, or give them a bit longer to write the exact sentences down.

This activity gives learners practice in scanning a text to quickly find specific information – a key skill for Part 3 of the Reading test.

### 2 Use emojis to read between the lines

Prepare a worksheet with four statements, each expressing a different person's opinion on the same topic (e.g. food, school, holidays, or another suitable B2-level topic from the *ESOL for Schools Qualification Handbook*), and four emojis that represent those opinions, but in jumbled order. Put learners in pairs and give each pair a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to underline the words or phrases that show how each person feels, then match each statement to the emoji that best reflects the person's attitude.

This helps learners focus on how something is said, not just what is said – a key skill for Reading Part 3.

### 3 Turn learners into text detectives

Put learners in pairs. Give each pair four mini-texts that are two or three sentences long (e.g. a blog post, a menu, a sign and a complaint email). Then ask the following questions:

- › Who wrote each text?
- › Who is the text for?
- › Why was the text written?

If learners need more support, provide three multiple-choice options for each question. Once learners have completed the activity, have them share their ideas as part of a whole-class discussion.

This activity builds learners' awareness of text purpose and audience, which will help them answer the questions in the Reading Part 3 task.

#### **4 Play “Whose voice is it?”**

Prepare three or four short texts (two to three sentences each) on the same B2 ESOL for Schools topic (e.g. a theme park, homework, TikTok). Each text should express a different person’s point of view, varying opinions, tone or emotion. Then write three or four statements that summarise those views (e.g. “thinks it’s a waste of time”; “loves it but sees a problem with it”; “mentions a funny story”). Put learners in pairs and give each pair a set of texts and statements to match to each other.

This activity helps learners practise identifying attitudes and opinions – key skills for Part 3 of the Reading test – in a simple and engaging way.

## HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR READING PART 4: QUESTIONS WITH SHORT ANSWERS

**Learners will be given a continuous text followed by seven questions. They write answers to the questions using 1–5 words.**

- › To prepare learners for this part, provide them with similar texts to those in the task (e.g. narrative, descriptive, expository, biographical) and have them practise answering “Wh-” and “How” questions about the texts. You could do this in class or set as homework.
- › Aim to develop crucial reading strategies, particularly scanning, as this part of the Reading test requires a detailed understanding of the text.
- › Tell learners to pay attention to the title of the text as this will give them a clue as to what it is about.
- › Advise learners to read the whole text first to gain a good understanding of it, before attempting to answer the questions.
- › Remind learners to write short answers (1–5 words), as they won’t be awarded extra marks for longer responses.
- › If doing the paper-based test, learners should make sure their writing is legible – they could lose marks if the Examiner can’t understand what they’ve written.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.





## CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE LISTENING PART 4



### Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Reading test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 4 of the Reading test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

#### Reading Part 4

Read the text and answer the questions. Use a maximum of five words for each question.

##### Ancient airplanes - Did the Incas build aircrafts?

In 1954, the Colombian government sent part of its collection of ancient artifacts to the USA for further analysis. Emmanuel Staubs, a leading jeweller, took six weeks to make copies of six of the objects. Initially, these objects were thought to be representing animals. Fifteen years later, one was given to biologist Ivan Sanderson for analysis. After thorough examination that lasted a month and several discussions with experts, Sanderson's conclusion was that the object is a model of an aircraft at least a thousand years old.

Approximately 2 inches long, these objects were worn as jewellery on neck chains. Other suggested usages as charms or toys were later rejected. Their exact age was difficult to determine, however, it is believed that they all date back to 500 - 800 AD.

Both Sanderson and Dr Arthur Poyslee of the Aeronautical Institute of New York stated that the object did not represent any known winged animal. In fact, the little artifact appears more mechanical than biological, mostly because of the shape of the wings. For example, the front wings are delta-shaped, unlike animal wings. The tail is perhaps the item resembling a plane the most, as it is triangular and vertical to the wings.

Adding to the mystery, researchers examined the left side of the tail, where ID marks appear on many planes today. They found a symbol as confusing as the gold model itself, since it has been identified as the Aramaic letter B. This may indicate that if there was an original plane, it did not come from Colombia, but it was the product of a population from the Middle East who knew the secret of flying.

In 1997, Peter Belting put the theory to the test. He centered his research on historical evidence and found that the wings of insects are at the top of the body, not at the bottom, and that all Incan artifacts, except these few suspected "planes", were made correctly. Belting studied many scientific essays and made a model plane, first with a propeller, afterwards with a jet engine. Whereas the first has to take off by hand, the jet engine one also had landing gear.

At a conference in Orlando, Florida, the researcher showed a recording where both models were actually able to fly. The jet-engine model was also capable of taking off and landing perfectly. A live demonstration later took place in the parking lot of the Florida mall, yet the models can be found in several museums around the world. Despite Belting's findings, archaeology identifies them as representations of birds, lizards, amphibians and insects, common in the region and period.

1. How long did it take Sanderson to decide what the objects were?

.....

2. What was the purpose of the objects?

.....

3. What makes the objects look like a machine?

.....

4. In the fourth paragraph, what does it refer to?

.....

5. What was Belting's theory based on?

.....

6. What extra equipment did Belting's second model have?

.....

7. Where can someone see the copies of the objects?

.....

Sample taken from B2 Reading Part 4 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › How many texts are there in Part 4? (*answer: one (long) text*)
- › How many questions does Part 4 have? (*answer: seven questions*)
- › What kind of questions are they? (*answer: open-ended / "Wh-" questions*)
- › How long can each answer be? (*answer: a maximum of five words*)

## TEST ACTIVITY

This activity draws on learners' prior knowledge, develops their skimming and detailed reading skills, and provides practice for the Part 4 task.

### Step 1

Tell the class they are going to read a text about ancient airplanes believed to have been built by the Incas around 1,000 years ago. To engage them with the topic, ask questions, such as:

- › What do you know about the Inca civilisation? (*example answers: it began in the Peruvian highlands around the 13th century; Inca technology and architecture were highly developed – the Inca cut stones for their buildings so accurately that they fitted together perfectly and didn't require sand or cement to keep them in place; the Inca performed brain surgeries and also made many discoveries in medicine, etc.*)
- › Do you think the first airplanes could have been built by the Incas around 1,000 years ago? Why (not)?

### Step 2

Put learners in pairs and give each pair a copy of the task. Ask them to briefly skim the text and answer the following (challenging!) questions:

- › What did biologist Ivan Sanderson claim? (*answer: He claimed that an ancient artifact found in Colombia was a model of an aircraft that was at least 1,000 years old and that it did not represent a winged animal.*)
- › What did researcher Peter Belting do? (*answer: He put the theory to the test to see if such a plane could fly.*)
- › What did archaeologists support? (*answer: They supported the theory that the artifacts were representations of birds, lizards, amphibians and insects.*)

### Step 3

Ask learners to share their answers to the questions in Step 2 with the class and then provide the correct answers.

### Step 4

Put learners in pairs and give each pair a copy of the task. Ask them to re-read the four texts and answer the questions which follow.

### Step 5

Ask learners to share their answers with the rest of the class as part of a whole-class discussion. Then provide the correct answers.

*(answers: 1 a/one month, 2 jewelry, 3 (the shape of) the wings, 4 (the) symbol, 5 historical evidence, 6 landing gear, 7 (in several) museums (around the world))*



## MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR READING PART 4 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more reading skills.

### 1 Set a prediction challenge

Put learners in pairs or groups. Before reading the text, give the class the title of the text and three or four key words from it (e.g. aircraft, Incas, model, artifact). Based on this information, pairs/groups write two or three short sentences that predict what the text might be about. They then read the text to see which of their predictions was correct.

This activity draws on learners' background knowledge and builds interest in the topic.

### 2 Do a timed information hunt

Put learners in pairs. Give each pair seven sentences related to the text, but with information missing (e.g. The model was found in \_\_\_\_). Ask them to skim the text to complete the sentences with no more than five words. To make this activity more exciting, set a time limit. Have learners share their ideas with the rest of the class as part of a whole-class discussion. Then provide the correct answers.

This activity trains learners to skim a text quickly to find key details – an essential skill in the Reading test, where time is limited.

### 3 Organise a question swap

After reading the text, ask learners to write two or three open-ended questions they could ask the author or a character from the text. The answers must be found in the text and limited to no more than five words. Put learners in pairs. They swap their questions with their partner, who then tries to answer them by locating the relevant information in the text.

This activity encourages learners to engage actively with the text by formulating open-ended questions, promoting deeper comprehension and interpretation. Writing questions requires learners to think critically about the content and the perspectives of the author or characters. Swapping questions with a partner adds an interactive element, fostering collaboration and reinforcing reading-for-detail skills as learners search for concise answers within the text. Overall, this activity supports both creative thinking and close reading – essential skills for effective text analysis.



## B2 General Reading Tips

These tips provide useful strategies for tackling the different B2 Reading task types and will help learners approach the test with confidence.

- › If there are words learners don't know, encourage them to guess their meaning from the context. This will improve their overall comprehension and help them to feel more confident.
- › Have learners practise reading strategies (skimming and scanning).
- › Tell learners that the information in the texts will follow the same order as the questions in the task.
- › If learners are struggling to choose the correct answer (e.g. for multiple-choice tasks), they can try to eliminate the wrong answers instead.
- › Remind learners that once they've finished the Reading test, they should go back and check all their answers.
- › For extra language practice in class, ask learners to explain their answers, e.g. for multiple-choice tasks, they could share why they chose a particular option rather than the other two.
- › Have learners practise Reading tasks using the free practice papers on the [LanguageCert website](#).



# Ensuring learners are ready for the ESOL for Schools B2 Reading test

When learners have finished preparing for the Reading test, it's important that they retain key information about it. On Test Day, learners often experience nerves, which can lead to forgetfulness or confusion about the procedures. Taking extra time to review test expectations and ensure learners are fully prepared can help alleviate anxiety and ensure the test process runs more smoothly.

Here's a list of questions to remind learners of what to expect in the Reading test (you may wish to add some of your own):

- › How many parts does the Reading test have? *(answer: four parts)*
- › How many questions does it comprise in total? *(answer: 26 questions)*
- › What types of questions will there be in the Reading test? *(answer: multiple-choice, multiple matching and open-ended/"Wh-" questions)*
- › What's the duration of the Reading and Writing test? *(answer: 2 hours 10 minutes for both the Reading and Writing tests. Note: there is no break between these two tests.)*
- › How many marks are awarded for each question? *(answer: 1 mark)*
- › Are test takers given any extra time to record their answers on the Answer Sheet? *(answer: If taking the paper-based test, an extra 10 minutes is granted at the end of the Written component. However, no extra time is provided for the computer-based test or the online test with live, remote invigilation.)*



# Helpful resources and contact information

At LANGUAGECERT, we're committed to providing comprehensive support for both learners and teachers.

Our website offers a wealth of free resources to help prepare for both the Written and Spoken components of the ESOL for Schools B2 test.

Handbooks provide teachers with practical tips and valuable strategies for effectively preparing learners for the test. They also include detailed descriptions of tasks at every level. Our free downloadable practice papers are an excellent tool for helping learners become familiar with the format and content of the test.

## **ESOL for Schools Written component resources:**

- Listening-Reading-Writing Qualification handbook
- Qualification Overview handbook
- Assessing Writing Performance handbook
- Official Practice Papers
- Sample Answer Sheets
- Teacher's Guide (Listening & Reading, Writing)

## **ESOL for Schools Spoken component resources:**

- Speaking Qualification handbook
- Preparing Learners for the ESOL Speaking Exams Guide
- Assessing Speaking Performance handbook
- Official Practice Papers
- Teacher's Guide (Speaking)

## **Additional support available:**

- Books
- FAQs
- Live and pre-recorded webinars

To access these resources, visit: [www.LANGUAGECERT.org/en/preparation](http://www.LANGUAGECERT.org/en/preparation)

## **Further information**

For more information about the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools test, visit our website **[www.LANGUAGECERT.org](http://www.LANGUAGECERT.org)** or contact our Customer Services team.

# Appendix

# Appendix: Essential language structures and functions for B2

At B2 level (for Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking), learners are expected to be familiar with a number of structures and language functions as shown in the table below.

## › Functions/notions

Describing experiences  
Describing feelings and emotions  
Describing hopes and plans  
Giving precise information  
Expressing abstract ideas  
Expressing certainty, probability, doubt  
Speculating  
Expressing opinions  
Expressing agreement / disagreement  
Expressing reaction, e.g. indifference  
Critiquing and reviewing

## › Discourse functions

Initiating and closing a conversation  
Checking understanding (from both a speaker's and a listener's point of view)  
Managing interaction (interrupting, changing topic, resuming or continuing)  
Taking the initiative in interaction  
Encouraging and inviting another speaker to continue / come in  
Interacting informally (reacting, expressing interest, sympathy, surprise)

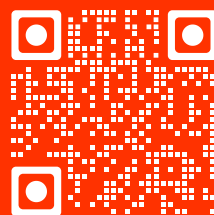
## › Discourse markers

Linkers: sequential – past time  
Connecting words expressing cause and effect, contrast, etc.  
Linkers: *although, in spite of, despite*  
Discourse markers to structure formal speech

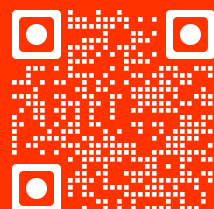
## › Grammar forms

Past simple (narrative)  
Past continuous (narrative)  
used to (narrative)  
Would expressing habit in the past  
Past perfect  
Past perfect continuous  
Future time (will, going to)  
Future continuous (prediction)  
Future perfect  
Future perfect continuous  
Present perfect  
Present perfect continuous  
Mixed conditionals  
*wish*  
All passive forms  
Reported speech (range of tenses)  
Relative clauses  
Modals of deduction and speculation  
Modals: can't have, needn't have  
Articles  
Lexico-grammatical features (phrasal verbs, collocations)

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